

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: Anger (Matthew 5:21-26)

Learning Goals: Students should analyze Jesus' teaching on anger and apply it to their own daily lives.

Opening Question: Is it wrong to get angry? Why or why not?

Prayer

Discuss Question on Board

Here, Jesus begins the first of six **antitheses**. ("You have heard it was said . . . but I tell you . . .")

- Jesus' comments are not antithetical to Torah, but to a particular understanding of Torah.
- Jesus is going beyond the text of Scripture to the intent of Scripture (spirit of the text).
- In doing this, Jesus is essentially "building a fence around the Torah" (similar to the Pharisees). Jesus is different than the Pharisees in that he knows the heart of God and is instructing people to seek the true heart of the commands.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment . . ."

3 parts to this passage:

1. Jesus' redefinition of murder (5:21-22)
 - Jesus is reinterpreting the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17)
 - Jesus goes beyond the fruit of murder to the seed of anger. (see James 1:14-15)
2. Jesus' exhortation to reconciliation (5:23-24)
 - Jesus is offering a counter-behavior to anger - reconciliation.
 - "Brother or sister" - reference to those within the community of believers.
 - Reconciliation trumps even the sacredness of offering a sacrificial gift in the temple.
 - The status of heart affects our ability to worship properly.
 - "Has something against you" - Jesus is not talking theological differences or petty human disagreements but anger, the kind of anger that leads to murder.
3. Jesus' restating exhortation with a warning (5:25-26)
 - Jesus moves reconciliation outside the circle of followers to include those with whom one is in a legal dispute (someone suing a follower of Jesus).

Is Jesus saying that all anger is bad?

- We have examples in scripture of God and Jesus seeming to get angry
 - God getting angry at Moses (Exodus 4:14)
 - God's anger at the Golden calf (Exodus 32)
 - Jesus toward the Pharisees - "You blind fools!" (Mark 3:5)
 - Jesus cleansing the temple (Matthew 21:12 and parallels)
- What about the passage we get later in the New Testament: "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry . . ." (Ephesians 4:26 NIV)?

Answer: No. But Jesus is teaching that believers are to avoid sinful anger, and they are capable of being transformed from anger. In the future kingdom of God, when all is consummated and when heaven comes to earth, anger will vanish because loving fellowship will flourish. Nothing expresses kingdom realities more than reconciled relations.

So What? What do we do about it?

- We shouldn't only think about this in terms of extreme examples (reconciliation of Jews and Nazis following WWII, Truth and Reconciliation Project in South Africa, reconciliation between Tutsi's and Hutu's in Rwanda).
- Rather, we should focus on the ordinariness of Jesus' command.
 - *Jesus has in mind here relations between husbands and wives, fathers and mothers to children, sibling relations, friends, relations of neighbors and community members to those with whom we work.*
- We must be intentional about reconciliation for it to become a pervasive lifestyle. We need to practice on the little things if we have any hope of being successful on the big things.

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Antitheses
- Finish this statement: "You have heard it was said you shall not murder, but I tell you . . ."
- What is the relationship between reconciliation and worship?