

Come and Become pt 6 : Freedom from Anger

-Intro story:

-In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game. But what happened that day was anything but routine. The Orioles' John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well.

-Anger is a powerful emotion with immense potential for impacting our life and surroundings

-the problem we face is that the fires of our anger rarely burn as quickly and drastically as those in that story

-for us the fire is usually subtle,,, progressing at such a pace that we don't notice the impact

-friendships are slowly undermined and consumed

-marriages, family, relationships in the church

-all of these relationships are built on this wooden platform

-the flames of anger slowly gnaw away at this platform

-year after year the space these relationships have to function on shrinks

-until eventually there is no more suitable platform and those relationships plunge into an abyss

-when those relationships finally do fall, we tend to only see the final event that pushed them over the edge. We fail to consider the countless expressions and thoughts of anger that shrunk the platform in such a way that the fall became inevitable

Last week we established our problem. You were built for relationships but Cultivated Anger Isolates.

-Most of the great blessing God intends for your life, he will send across the bridges of human relationships.

-we told you to imagine yourself as an island with WEBS OF SUSPENSION BRIDGES.

-friends. -the church. -spouse -parents. -kids. -siblings

-there is resource of every kind (relational, financial, knowledge/ help, encouragement, ideas, correction, fun / joy, wisdom / know how)

-blessing is surrounding you at all times but these suspension bridges must be in tact for the resources to go back and forth.

-Cultivated Anger removes the boards from those bridges.

-over time if Anger remains we are eventually isolated

-Last week we established the difference between innocent anger and cultivated anger.

-Kindling Fire vs. a Fire we add fuel to

-Innocent anger flares up but is allowed to burn out with a natural progression.

-Anger becomes Cultivated when we use our thoughts, words, or even actions to keep the fire burning longer.

-we begin to mull over all the other ways that person is stupid

- we replay the offense mentally over and over
- we talk about it with others
- all of these and more, keep the flame of anger burning beyond the natural scope*
- At that point Anger becomes more of a decision than a feeling.
- We have chosen to CONTINUE TO BE ANGRY (cultivated anger)

-There is a Progression to our Anger:

-Cultivated Anger: it is mostly about our thoughts ,, it is not *that bitter yet*,, we still feel fondly about the person,, we still want them around,,, but we do at times CHOOSE to focus on what is negative about them,,, we chose to think angry thoughts

-eventually things progress to Contempt

-Contemptuous Anger: the dismissal and devaluation of the person,, we have been angry long enough that it is exhausting to uphold the value of this person so we now begin to think about and treat this person or group of people DISMISSIVELY

-eventually Contempt gives way to Harm

-Harming Anger: now our anger seeks to hurt or negatively impact the person we are angry with,, could be physical violence,, but could just as easily be VERBAL..... we seek to DAMAGE the FEELINGS or the REPUTATION of a person or group

-These stages of the progression of anger are cumulative, so that each next step also contains the previous ones as well.....

-The consistent presence of Anger Poisons our Inner Life and Robs us of the Outer Life God intended us to have.

-that is why Jesus took such a strong stance against Anger in the Sermon on the Mount

-Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

-Remember, not murdering was not the point! The Command,, God's Intension for us was that WE LOVE EACH OTHER, the way Jesus loved us.

-The point isn't just don't be angry because it is against the rules,,, the point is that Cultivated Anger will make you incapable of the Love and Life God has for you.

The first key to Freedom is Commitment to Extinguishing Cultivated Anger when we Recognize it.

-This is Repentance. This is moving in the opposite direction.

-The road to freedom starts between our ears.

-There will be moments when God allows us to recognize our sinful anger.

- gross thoughts we recognize
- things we catch ourselves saying
- feelings about people that catch our attention

-We need to have made a commitment to ourselves and God ahead of time that when we see these things, we respond by changing the direction of our thoughts.

-Decide ahead of time, "*that is not who I want to be*". So that when you see it you are prepared to "walk it back".

- establish now, that you don't want to live angry
- commit now that you don't want to continue to pull boards from bridges
- decide now that you don't want to be isolated

-2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

-Paul was saying "we do not live in contemptuous anger the way this world does"

-we "fight" in the opposite direction

-we don't battle in a way that adds to division

-We battle in a way that eliminates division

-then he says the crucial point: "We take every thought captive"

-who's thoughts can we take captive? Ours or others? OURS

-So in our Battle, what are we battling against? OUR OWN THOUGHTS

-The war of "Sinful Anger" vs "Jesus Like Love" is won or lost in what thoughts we allow ourselves to linger in.

-example: -"just look at her, who does she think she is,,,,, she is so....." STOP!!!!

-We must evict negative, angry thoughts from our minds.

-but what comes next is just as crucial.....

-Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

-Evicting the wrong thoughts and thinking the right thoughts begins to put boards back into the bridges all around us.

-Before you can ever have restored relational bridges around you, you have to be able to think about the people in such a way that the bridges are seen as a positive thing.

-some of you are thinking,,, "that is great but there are some people I don't want bridges with"

-Remember: the most dangerous kind of Anger Isolation is Indirect!

-your anger doesn't just isolate you from those you are angry with

-your anger isolates you in general,,, it makes you difficult to be around and communicate with

-anger makes you the kind of person others avoid real connection with,,,,, It removes SO MANY BRIDGES, that making the trip across the bridge becomes TO PRECARIOUS for MOST people

-the destruction of the bridges you want is the collateral damage associated with allowing the destruction of the bridges you don't want

-so your first step toward freedom from anger: Evict the Negative, Angry thoughts, and purposely look for kind, positive thought residents.

-We cannot control what people do to us. But we can control how we think about them.

-you are not punishing anyone with NEGATIVE thoughts YOU THINK about them, that only hurts you.

-"bitterness is poison we drink hoping to hurt someone else"

-NEXT: Jesus gave us a step that carries us beyond our own thoughts

-Matthew 5:23-25 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Followers of Jesus take personal Responsibility for Reconciliation.

-Jesus sets the scenario making us the good guy or girl:

-you are at the altar in the temple worshipping ,, being good,,, doing your thing....

-you are one of the good people

-while there you remember someone HAS ISSUE WITH YOU

-This is not even your issue.

-this is THEIR ISSUE, THEIR PROBLEM,,, it is not bothering you at all

-but even though it is their issue Jesus tells us to Go and Fix it.

-So let me get this straight Jesus,,,, we are supposed to take responsibility for OUR anger, **and** when we discover someone ELSE IS ANGRY we are supposed to take responsibility for their issue to?

-Yes

-Why?

-because the command is not to “not murder”. The command is “Jesus like” love.

-Romans 5 tells us that this is how God demonstrated love for us: while we were still sinners and ENEMIES of God,,, Christ died to reconcile us.

-so because Jesus took responsibility for our reconciliation, we, who follow him, do the same thing for others when given the opportunity.

-You have the God given ability through Grace to put boards back in bridges that you didn't even remove!

-this may sound like a responsibility but it is actually a **super power**

-2 Corinthians 5:18 says that we have been reconciled to Christ and now given the ministry of reconciliation.

-Remember that it is not just that God wants you to receive blessing from others, but he also wants to bless others through you.

-that is why we should be concerned if someone has issue with us

-because our ministry and superpower is to BRING RECONCILIATION

-you have been given the ability by God through love and humility to rebuild bridges that you didn't destroy

-Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

-To follow Jesus is to be active in rebuilding strained relational bridges to whatever degree is within our control.

-By going straight to this extreme Jesus covers relational disruptions that are our fault and are not.

-so if you have issue with someone this passage just assumes you know that you need to go to them and make it right, try to bring reconciliation

-not only that but even if you are fine but someone else has issue with you,,, you still take Responsibility to go to them and try to make it right and bring reconciliation

-Jesus doesn't care who's fault it is. He just wants reconciliation.

-This is going to help you out in the end anyway.

-no issue or anger stays 1-sided for long

-eventually their anger for you, will breed anger in you for them!

-most feelings eventually become mutual

-so save yourself the awkwardness now and issues later USE YOUR SUPER POWER,,, FIGHT for RECONCILIATION with people

-contend for connectedness

Our superpower works best when it is used quickly.

-Jesus adds urgency to the need for reconciliation.

-“even if you are at the temple with your sacrifice and remember an issue, leave it and go find the person and settle it, then come back and finish”

-this was not meant to be practical instruction, but rather to show you the importance and urgency.

-this was not even the same thing as us leaving church,,,,, we live by church

-most people then had to travel multiple days to the temple

-even if you are here in Jerusalem at the temple and you remember back home in Galilee your wife has a grievance with you,,,, stop what you are doing,,,, go make it right,,,, then come back and worship God

-make reconciliation an urgent matter

-The reason that Reconciliation should be urgent is that anger is progressive, it mutates and spreads.

-you may not be upset at all but that person may be progressing further and further into cultivated anger as the days go by,,,,,, then if we still are not urgent about it they even move to Contempt and possibly harm.

-their progression is NOT YOUR FAULT

-but you do have the power to prevent all that (super power called Reconciliation)

-The more timely reconciliation is the less distance it has to cover.

-when you go and initiate reconciliation you will set the other person free, but they will end up confessing to you all the negative things they thought, said, or did.

-the longer you wait the longer and more colorful that list becomes

-that means there will be more that you will need to get over....

-they are going to say,, “I am so glad you came and talked to me, I am glad we cleared this up, in the interest of moving forward I need to tell you that I told everyone you used to date your cousin,,, And I called the police and pretended to be reporting myself for drunk driving and gave them your license plate number,,, oh and I have been lacing your coffee cup with small amounts of laxative..... “

-if we use our super power fast enough maybe we can avoid most that unpleasantry

Summary:

- Freedom starts between our ears.
 - we wage war against anger by evicting our negative angry thoughts and moving in some positive residents.
- When we find out there is an issue separating us from people (our issue or theirs) we take responsibility for going to them, and making things right.
 - we have been reconciled to God through Jesus' self sacrifice and his willingness to come to us,,,, HE NOW GIVES his FOLLOWERS that MINISTRY & Superpower
- Finally our superpower works best when it is used quickly.
 - the more timely reconciliation is, the less ground it needs to cover

-Closing Story: *back to that 1894 baseball game*

- what started off as some anger between to baseball players rather than being resolved was cultivated,,,,, it Progressed and Mutated.
- It progress even beyond those two:
 - their anger consumed the entirety of both teams
 - it progressed still,,,, consuming a crowd of thousands of spectators
- their anger burned down the entire stadium and a good portion of city

- But every thought and interaction carries the same potential for good as it does for evil.
 - it can as easily build as burn
- What starts off simply in your mind has the potential to transform and shape the way you interact with countless people.
 - their interactions with you have the potential to shape their interactions with others outward... eventually touching and impacting many many people

- We can set *CURRENTS* of peace and kindness in motion and those currents will help give birth to a different kind of tomorrow:
 - in our marriage. -for our kids. -for our coworkers.
- By doing that we are not just making our lives better,, but WE ARE BEING SALT AND LIGHT,,, we are Joining Jesus in the Healing Of The World.