

The 7 Deadly Sins—and How to Overcome Them

Discussion 3 :: Dealing with Anger

Resource: 'The Seven Deadly Sins' by Graham Tomlin, Chapter 4, Anger.

Timing: 40-50 minutes, leading into ministry/response time.

The Point: The main idea of each section—feel free to add other Scriptures, stories, etc to support the ideas.

An Illustration: Living examples from your own lives. Suggestions are offered, but feel free to use your own.

The Application: Ideas for how to live out and apply the principles being discussed.

Recap last week's discussion :: Dealing with Envy

The Point: Envy begins with discontentment and leads to unhealthy comparisons that usually result in ill feelings toward ourselves and others. God wants to teach us contentment by:

- Pursuing what God does rather than what the world does (2 Timothy 2:22).
- Learning to be content under all circumstances (Philippians 4:11-12).
- Admiring others with out the need to compare (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

The Application: Ask a couple of people to share their experiences while attempting to cultivate contentment in their lives. (refer to the action steps that were suggested last week)

Ice-breaker—break up into groups of two or three and discuss the following question:
What injustice(s) do you see in the world—and how do they make you feel about God?

Introduction to this week's discussion :: Dealing with Anger

Anger has been described as "an emotional state of being that ranges from mild irritation to fury and rage." Anger can remain passive in people that often suppress their feelings (although this often leads to an unhealthy physical or emotion results). Or it can become outwardly expressed in often violent ways. But anger is sometimes used as a fuel to ignite passions or action in the face of injustice. Regardless of how it is expressed, the root of anger seems to grow from the feeling of being victimized or from wanting to correct an injustice. There is a sense of wanting to correct a wrong; to take matters into our own hands.

Some claim that expressing anger is always a healthy choice; and others say it can never be justified. Our culture often teaches us that "expressed" anger is a more acceptable—if not necessary—alternative to withholding our feelings. And while in some ways this may certainly be true, God offers us an additional perspective to consider. Tonight's discussion will focus on what God says about anger and how he would have us deal with it.

1. Righteous anger? (Psalm 139:21-23)

The Point: Rather than misplace our anger, we need to get to the roots of our frustrations and hurts and deal with them directly. Anger can make us believe or behave as if we have a "right" to lash out at others in order to make ourselves feel better.

Determining where our frustrations stem from can help us address them appropriately.

- We feel as if God had abandoned us (Psalm 13:1-2).
- We are consumed by our despair (Psalm 31:10).
- We feel as if our "enemies" are getting the best of us (Psalm 68:3-4).
- We are infuriated at injustice (Proverbs 29:7).

An Illustration: Describe a time when you lashed out at another person(s). When you consider the circumstances now, do you still feel justified in your anger and your behaviour toward that person? Why or why not?

The Application: The next time you are tempted to express your anger outwardly, take a moment to ask yourself if the person or circumstance in front of you is the real reason for your frustration.

2. Strive for peace (Romans 12:18)

The Point: Even if we believe ourselves justified in our anger, God expects us to be instruments of peace and forgiveness. Anger can make us believe or behave in a way that promotes division rather than reconciliation.

God asks us to seek peace and forgiveness above all else.

- We are to forgive as we have been forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15).
- We are to forgive and not hold grudges (Leviticus 19:18).
- We are to promote peace whenever we can (Romans 12:17-18).
- We are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44).

An Illustration: Describe a time when you sought peace in the midst of a tense situation. What was the result?

The Application: Forgiveness does not mean “forgetting”—rather it is the recognition that only God is to sit in judgement of others. Take some time to consider if there is anyone that you need to forgive—and relinquish judgement of. Ask God to direct your next steps toward this person (if any).

3. Let God be God (Psalm 46:10)

The Point: God wants to be an advocate for us. Anger can make us believe and behave as if we have to fight for our own interests because no one else will.

God tells us that judgement and vengeance are his alone.

- Trust that God is just (Psalm 11:7).
- Do not act—let God fight on your behalf (Exodus 14:14).
- God is in the midst of our battles (Deuteronomy 20:4).
- He promises to rescue us (Psalm 22:8).

An Illustration: Describe a time when you trusted God with a difficult or painful circumstance. How did you feel about it, and what was the outcome? OR, conversely, share a time when you did not trust God with difficult circumstances and chose to act on your own behalf.

The Application: Consider current circumstances in your life where you have been reluctant to give God complete control over the situation, leading only to your frustration and anger. Choose to relinquish control, and note what happens.

Ideas for ministry/response time during the pastorate evening:

- Lead people in a discussion about God’s peace. Ask the group to consider: where do I need/want to experience/be peace in my life’s circumstances? End the evening by breaking up into groups of two or three and praying over this issue.
- Lead a meditation for people to ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind people who have hurt and angered them. Pray for individuals to release the right to judge; and instead, to be instruments of peace and forgiveness.

Ideas for ministry/response time during the week :: seeking peace and forgiveness

- Choose one of suggestions from the “The Application” portion of this week’s talk and commit to doing it in the next two weeks. Be prepared to share your experiences and the results the next time the pastorate meets.

- Write a letter offering forgiveness to someone who has hurt you, OR asking forgiveness from someone you have hurt. *Note: you do not have to send the letter, the discipline of writing it may be enough, but do consider it.*
- Research the story of someone who chose peace or forgiveness as a response to injustice (e.g. Corrie Ten Boom, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King JR, etc.). Consider the implications of that choice.