

#35

Ephesians 4: 17-18; 25-5:2

“So I’m telling you this, and I insist on it in the Lord: you shouldn’t live your life like the Gentiles anymore. They base their lives on pointless thinking,¹⁸ and they are in the dark in their reasoning. They are disconnected from God’s life because of their ignorance and their closed hearts”

4:25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

4:26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

4:27 and do not make room for the devil.

4:28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.

4:29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

4:31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,

4:32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,

5:2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.



Last Sunday, I talked about unity in the church. It is like a puzzle. Each of our lives is one little piece of the puzzle. We come together with other to make a picture. Sin breaks us into a jumbled boxful of pieces. That is not God's will or intention. God has a beautiful picture in mind and every one of us is an important part of the picture. Just as a missing piece is obvious at the end so too is it obvious when one of falls out of the picture. God sent His Son to provide a way for us to come together. We celebrate that fact every Sunday as we remember Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. It is God who knows how to fit us together. We certainly don't know how.

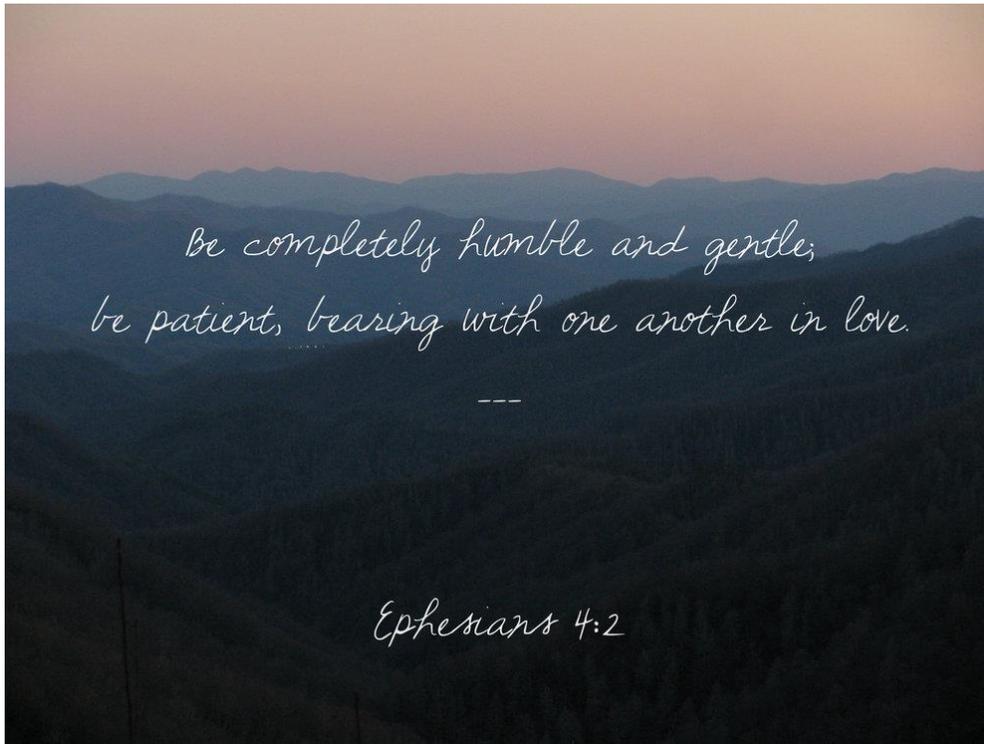
Yet, we each have a part in the grand scheme.

First, in response to God's love expressed through Jesus, we need to be willing to come closer to the other pieces, to join in unity and cling together through thick and thin. Paul writes, we must be completely humble, gentle and patient. We stick together and we make a beautiful picture for the world to catch a glimpse of what the kingdom of God is like. We are called to be the light for the world and we bring other people into God's picture. "God's goal is for us to become mature adults" (Eph 4:13)

My first 9 months here I tried to focus more on ourselves. We talked about being honest with yourself, to God and others. I very much believe it starts with our personal relationship with God. It begins with us being honest about who we are individually (sinners saved by grace) and who we want to be (a holy people). Now we will shift to move and talk about us as a church.

There is a wonderful song in the hymnal. I am sure many of you know it:
I am the church
You are the church
We are the church together
All who follow Jesus
All around the world
Yes, we're the church together.

The question becomes one of maturity. Are you mature enough to take a role in the body of Christ? Are we mature enough to work together as a body of Christ for the kingdom of God? I invite to join is this journey as the church. First of all, be part of what God is doing in the body of Christ. Yes, we will continue as individuals to bring love and good news to the world. But as the church we can and should do more.



Working together requires less pride in what I did and more in what we do together. I do not know about you but I love to be recognized, valued and even be praised. There is not a day, that I don't pray for humility. Believe me, God is helping me to stay humble with my failures and my mistakes. Why do you think of all three things, that Paul asks us to be the first is humbleness? The practice of humbleness is not done by yourself. We are called to be a part of the body of Christ, not separate cells floating around randomly doing things here and there. We called to be together, encourage one another and minister together. We are one in Christ and one in ministry to all the world.

So today we continue to talk about the church and the unity of the church. How can we be the church that is different from the way we communicate with each other in other places? Pauls starts in verse 17: "So I'm telling you this, and I insist on it in the Lord: you shouldn't live your life like the Gentiles anymore".



There is difference between the life of the one who does not believe in God and in the one who believes in God. The place where you should see the difference is in church. What is the difference in my life that distinguishes me from a non believer? What is the mark?

Paul says, first it is in your thinking. Those, who are Gentiles, not Christians, base their lives on pointless thinking and they are in the dark in their reasoning. It is fascinating that the first mark for us as Christians is not what people see, hear or notice. It is who we are in our thinking. It is who we truly are and only the Lord knows who we are in our heart and our mind. Renew your mind. People who do not believe in God are disconnected from God's life because they have closed their minds and closed their hearts. As we come together we turn our heart to God first. It is a gift to be able to hear and it is an intentional choice. Where is your heart today? Are you open to the Word of God? Will you turn your thoughts away? Will you block yourself from hearing?

Do you project what you hear onto somebody else? Yes, we often think so-and-so needs to hear this. But God's Word this morning is for you and me.

When we come together as a church to admonish and encourage one another with our gifts. There is a reason. That reason is to bring glory to God by focusing on Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, serving together in ministry to the world.

Our main focus should be not into ourselves, but others within the church and in the world. I am excited to see how we will grow as we will turn into the community that brings light, love and the Word of God to Fairland. I am filled with joy to be a part of God's work here. I invite you to join and experience the blessing that comes when we are connected to God's work of putting together all the pieces of the puzzle all over the world.

As we are working together and we are planning to have even more focus on deepening relationships and intentionally going into the world as God's ambassadors there are some big problems that come up. We will focus today on one of them.

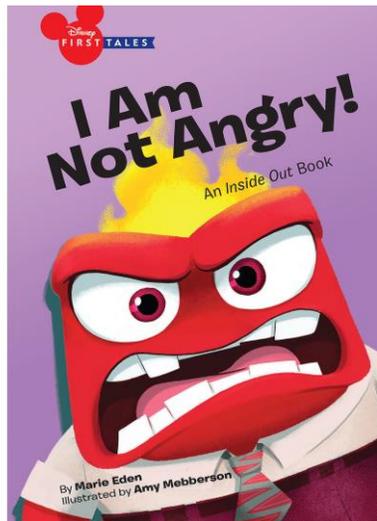


Anger. When the last time you got angry? Anger is a response. It is not a root problem. It is the result of hurt (physical or emotional), frustration, or fear. Very mild types of anger are typically described as "distaste," "displeasure", or "irritation," while "rage" refers to an extreme degree of anger associated with a loss of calmness or discipline.

We know that anger is not a sin. Jesus was without sin. Jesus became angry. In fact he was furious, when he overturned the money changers' tables in the temple.

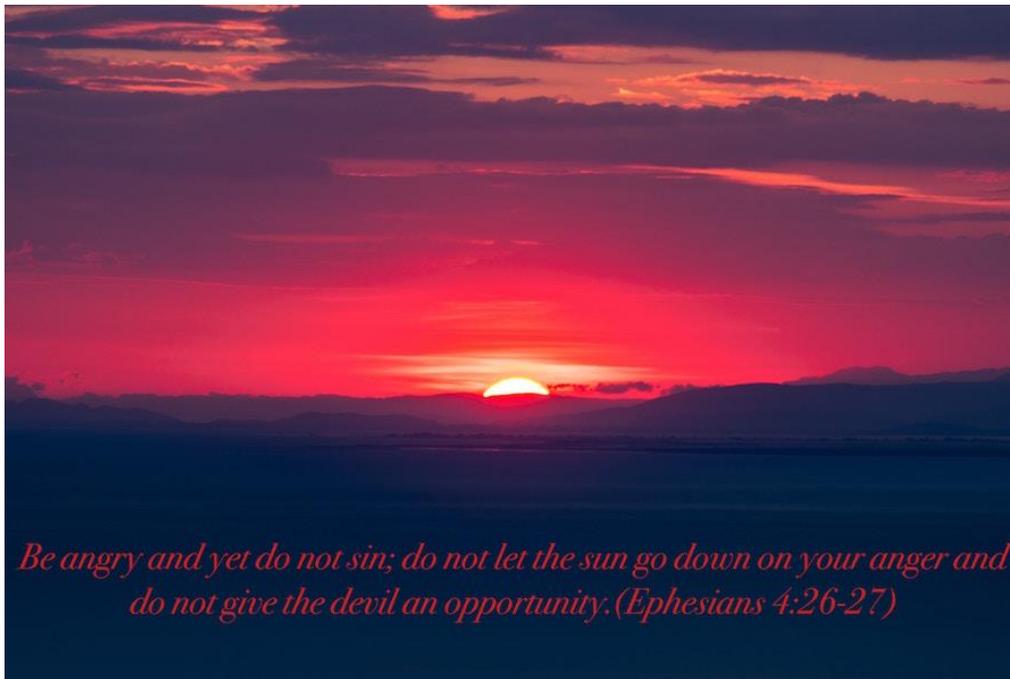
What makes you angry? I will start with one thing that makes me angry. I get irritated if I find an empty plastic bottle in the garbage. I take it out and will carry it very dramatically around the house to find out who in my family did it. I will let them know, in no uncertain terms, that it is wrong. I get frustrated that after all these years they have not learned the importance of recycling. It makes me angry because I feel the urge and understand the consequences of littering the beautiful world God created. I see the bottle and I see the way we kill ourselves and the animals. You will look at me and say to me: "You are over-reacting. You are crazy." That comment aggravates me even more.

How about people in the church? Some leaders lead in a way that you do not appreciate. Sometime people do or say things we think it is not Christian. It can get us very angry. We are a church. What do you do? How do you handle it?



Have you been upset and somebody asks "Are you angry?" You say, "I am not angry."

God does not say, "Do not be angry." Paul writes in his letter, "Be angry and do not sin." We should always acknowledge, what we feel including the emotion of anger.



We should say to ourselves "I am angry." You can even say it out loud. Ask yourself why you are angry. What is the true thing that made you angry? Is a selfish motive? Is it because of injustice that you witness?

What do you do when somebody hurts your feelings? You put your whole heart and soul into a project or service in the community and then somebody says something to you and hurts you. Hurts bring anger. It can be painful and frustrating to work together as children of God when somebody acts hurtful. Somebody does not do what they say they will do? Somebody does a project not the way you hoped for it to be done?

What do you do when you are angry at the pastor? I know that is unheard of.

How are we as a church to deal with each other and do not sin when we get angry for whatever reason there might be. Maybe you fear of something bad is going to happen and you get angry because others do not have the same fear.

Pauls writes, do not sin while you are angry. Do not let the sun set on your anger. Don't provide an opportunity for evil.

Again, the first steps are to acknowledge your anger and to evaluate the reason. The next steps are to turn to God with your feelings and ask for help. Whatever we want to do or say, we should not do it in the very moment we feel angry.

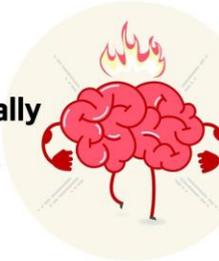
Some say you should count to 10 before responding and others say you should recite the Lord's Prayer before acting.

God's will for us is to have a life of peace and love, freedom and joy. We learn and grow.

On my very first Sunday as a pastor, in my very first church, in the very first hour I was put between two groups of people. They were very angry at each other. They were fighting and they wanted me to choose one side. The problem was the flower garden. Yes, indeed. Who will take care of it and how is it done? Oh, a very real problem for the church. It took us a while. It was not an easy to keep both groups in the church and have the garden to cared for. But to stay and to continue to be together is a key to maturity.

We work better with some people than others. That's ok. We are all be different and we stay together, not because of the people, but because of the call we have and we have been chosen to be part of God's body. I have realized that God is changing my heart and changes my anger and deepens my love for those that naturally I would not care about that much. God is good and the Holy Spirit is at work to help us be imitators of Jesus.

**Researchers Reveal
How **ANGER** Physically
Changes Your Brain
and Body**



We should not carry our anger over-night.

It does not say go and deal the very same day with a person who made you angry. But it does say do not let the anger stay in your own heart and mind. I have never paid too much attention to why. Paul writes, "because we will not provide the opportunity for evil."

What kind of opportunity is Paul is talking about?

Anger cracks open the door for evil. Your brain is actually very active during sleep doing important things processing all the input — it's not just resting. If you let your anger stay it will poison your relationship with God. Your anger can poison your thoughts. Like the tentacles of cancer it goes gradually deeper bringing evil thoughts. If you choose to be angry and not forgive and release, you let evil to disrupt the relationship between you and God, between you and the other person. God lets the sun

to go down and rise for all people. Let God deal with injustice. Let Him be the judge. We are responsible to deal with our anger. To deal with – not to ignore.

It was interesting to me that the first question God asked outside of the Garden of Eden was a question regarding anger.



God asked Cain, "Why are you angry?" Cain could not answer this question. Instead of dealing with his anger, he acted upon it. Cain did not talk to God about it. God saw his face and saw his anger. Cain refused to admit and bring healing from God. He felt that God was unfair to Him. Cain killed his brother Abel.

"Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption"

When we are angry, we are tempted to hurt people with our words. We hurt not only people but we grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Living Spirit of God that is working in us, healing and guiding, teaching and we are sealed for the day of redemption. Holy Spirit is a coach for us in this life.

As a body of Christ you we are called to be together in the exciting work of God. When you feel anger, acknowledge it, bring it to God. Before the sun comes down, replace it with forgiveness and with peace. Then ask God to be a judge and help you to reconcile. Do not let evil to come and rule your mind and your life. Give it to God. Choose to speak in Love. Choose to be humble, gentle and patient.

Are you angry today? Are you able to admit and name the reason you are angry? The next time I see the plastic bootle in the garbage I plan to just put it into recycling. And after I am not angry I can talk about our responsibilities to love the world with caring for it. The next time I am angry at a church meeting, I will pray quietly and breathe deeply inviting the Holy Spirit to take control. When I am angry next time in ministry together with others, I will ask myself why I am angry?

What will you do?

Let's come before our Father in prayer.