

**SUB TOPIC THEME:
DESTRUCTION-
CONTROLLING MY
ANGER**

Lesson Objective:

Dealing with anger can be a hard thing to do. Especially because sometimes we don't even realize why we are angry. The purpose of this lesson is to help students recognize where their anger comes from and learn how to deal with their anger.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. No equipment necessary.
2. Make sure to print off the Student Response sheet ahead of time.
3. Bring enough Bibles for all the students so they can see the word, but also encourage them to bring their own Bibles if they have them.

Instructive Prep:

Some of the students you work with may struggle with anger. You probably know which ones that I'm talking about. It can be hard sometimes understanding these feelings, where they come from and how to control them. You're angry at your best friend for moving, but you know they had no say in it. You're angry at your parents for another move, but you know those are orders. You're angry at your mom or dad for getting injured or worse, but you know these things happen. But then the question is what do you *do* when these things happen! What do you *do* with your anger?

While sometimes we know why we are angry, sometimes we don't; and then if and when we figure it out, we still have to deal with our anger, but all we're told is to get over it or work through it. Umm... my question is, how? Dealing with anger isn't something that comes naturally for us; it's something we have to learn to deal with and take care of. It's also not really something you learned about in grade school; so unless someone intentionally sat down and talked about it with you, you may feel like you're floundering. So that's what we're doing here. Opening up a space to learn and figure out how God would have us deal with our anger so we can live a healthy life full of peace and joy.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: learn, feel, do and what next. The goal is for students to learn something new, connect at an appropriate emotional level and participate in doing something during the study. Finally, the “What Next” section focuses on a change in attitude, and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember that the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in students’ lives, so the application section based on God’s truth is really the crux of the time together!

Intro:

Have you ever been hanging out with friends or maybe even your family and suddenly someone says something or does something and you feel like you just turned into the Incredible Hulk, ready to rip people apart? Maybe that is a little extreme for you, but you can probably think back and remember a time where you got pretty angry over something small. Actually, you may not even remember what set you off, but I bet you remember the feeling of the anger pulsing through you and the aftermath. Or maybe you fall into another camp. Maybe you do have good reason to be angry. Something happened to you and it wasn’t fair. It wasn’t right. You remember exactly what happened, vividly. Maybe that was what started this angry march and now, despite all your commands to stop, the march continues on. Do you feel out of control?

Sometimes these things can be hard to talk about. So I’ll get the ball rolling.

Intro Story:

Recently I have had the opportunity to spend some more time with my sisters than usual. The older I get, the harder it is to have quality time with them; they’re busy with school, with work or with their friends, but we make time for each other. We choose to be more intentional and have been able to hang out more recently. It’s been a lot of fun!

Now, I’m going to share this with you and you’re going to think to yourself, “Really? That is the silliest thing I have ever heard!” but stick with me! I think you will come to understand and maybe even relate.

My sisters and I decided to go out and grab some food. We had heard about this new place and so we choose to go check it out. It’s fun being able to do that; for me it’s like going on an adventure, discovering and trying new places.

So we pull into the restaurant. I throw the car in park and we head in. As we take our seats, the waitress comes to welcome us and ask what kind of drink we would like. She takes our order and we begin looking at the menu. We take our time, looking it over carefully, trying to choose which we think will be the best dish here. Finally, we order.

Fifteen minutes later our food arrives and then it happens...

My *younger* sister asks *us* who is going to pray for the food.

You may be thinking...so what's the big deal? Well don't worry, I'll tell you. First of all, it is my job to ask who wants to pray for the food. Second of all, it's always been my job to ask that question or just do it myself and third, it's not her job to ask us, it's mine. You can see why this would be a problem right? Clearly she has crossed a line.

Okay, maybe she didn't really cross a line, but I felt like she had! I didn't realize it at first, but I was angry. I laughed at her when she asked and told her not to worry about it. I got this, I would pray I said in a very sarcastic voice. Then I was snarky with her the rest of the meal! Not my finest moment.

The next day I sat there thinking about it all. Why had I acted that way? Why had I gotten so angry? Why had I chosen to be snarky with her and dismiss her? None of it made sense. She hadn't done anything, but with that one line I had become a monster and been really disrespectful to her. Why? Maybe you can think of a similar story. You just kind of lost it over something small.

It took me a while, but I began to understand why I acted that way. You see almost ten years earlier I had begun hanging out with this new friend. He was pretty cool. We had a lot of fun together, did life together, but then things started to get weird. He started trying to control my life. He would write suicidal poetry, manipulate me. Tell me one thing to make me do another. This went on for two years! He became super controlling and I became somebody he wanted me to be instead of myself. I lost control of my life.

Now, obviously a lot of time has past since then. Things are different. He is long gone, but that was also a long process. Finding myself and straightening my life back out. *I can't use that as an excuse for my poor behavior. But it does help me understand my personal struggle* and need for control in my life.

You see both these short stories are reflections of my heart. Of how my heart was hurt and the condition of my heart now if I don't pay attention to it and monitor it. Andy Stanley says in his book *Enemies of the Heart*, "The root of anger is the perception that something has been taken," (Stanley 57). I felt like I had lost control of my life all those years ago and sometimes when I'm not careful, when I forget to monitor my heart, forget to take care of myself, I can slip back into old habits and feelings. Will I struggle with this all my life? Will different things in your life affect you the rest of your days? I don't know. But obviously it was a struggle for me that day. The great thing is that we don't have to stay where we are. God wants us to continue to grow in all areas, including our self-control.

Andy Stanley in the same book gives us these four steps to use when trying to overcome anger.

1. Identify who you are angry with
2. Determine what they owe you
3. Cancel the debt (Forgive)
4. Dismiss the case.

The first one is pretty straightforward. Who upset you? Are you angry with them or are you really angry with yourself? Someone from your past? Maybe you have just chosen to take it out on your friend here and now because you can. The second one may sound a little more confusing, but it's simple. Step two is, what did they take? What did you lose? Remember the quote from before? "The root of anger is the perception that something has been taken," (57); something may not have actually been taken, but you feel like something has been, therefore, they owe you!

The next step is to cancel the debt. Whatever was taken, whatever is owed. You forgive. You let it go and love anyways, but it doesn't end there. These feelings of hurt, betrayal, anger, they will come up inside you again, sometimes when you least expect it, sometimes years later. That's why forgiveness can be hard sometimes, because you still have to heal. When you forgive someone, you *choose* to let go. Sometimes things will resurface; but when they do, that is when you *choose* to let it go again.

Intro Questions:

1. Have you ever exploded at someone knowing full well that your anger was way greater than it should have been? If so, what happened?
2. Has someone ever been really angry at you? If so, what happened? How did it leave you feeling?
3. Have you ever thought of forgiveness as a choice you intentionally make? What are your thoughts on that?

Personal Reflection Questions:

As a group take your time and go over the answers to these questions. Sometimes facing our anger can be hard. The reasons we are angry can be messy, hurtful, lodged deep into our hearts...so give students time to warm up. Allow them time to think about things and share what they want to. Remember that secrecy is the fuel of anger; healing happens when we are allowed to bring things to light.

1. Have you ever lashed out at someone you love for no reason? If so, what happened? How did you feel about it afterwards? How do you think they felt afterwards? (See Student Response Sheet)

2. Secrecy is the fuel for anger. Who are you really upset with? What do you really feel was taken from you? What is the root of your anger? Have you ever shared this with another person? (See Student Response Sheet)
3. Have you ever realized the power of forgiveness in your life? Look back at Andy Stanley's four steps. When you think about them, how do they make you feel? Does it feel impossible? Exciting to finally know how to start moving forward? Scary? How do these things make you feel?
4. Is there someone you need to forgive today? Whom and for what?
5. Write your own questions: _____

Central Bible Passages:

Forgiveness can be a hard thing to do. Even the disciples struggled with it. Here we see Peter ask the question, how often? I mean really. Someone keeps sinning against you, there has to be a limit, right? Jesus says something otherwise though. He tells us that we keep on forgiving because the way we treat others is the way that God will treat us.

I like Ephesians 4 paired with this account because I think it brings a little more clarity. Matthew 18 can sound harsh, but when we pair them with Paul's words we understand better. We forgive over and over again, because Christ has done that for us! Check out the actual verses. See what it says.

Matthew 18:21-35

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?"

"No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven, because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before the king. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay you everything!' The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

"Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he said. His fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you

back!’ But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. So he called the servant in. ‘You worthless slave!’ he said. ‘I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.’ The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount.”

And Jesus concluded, “That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

Ephesians 4:31-32
The New Life In Christ

Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.

Life Application:

1. Those verses were pretty enlightening for me. I especially like the Ephesians verses for when I get angry with others. It reminds me of the forgiveness that Christ gave me. How do the verses make you feel? What are questions that come up for you? Do you believe God’s word?
2. What are things that come to mind when you hear the word forgiveness? Is it a hard concept for you? Do you have questions about it like Peter did? Write down the things that come to mind. Maybe it’s a person or event. Write it down and pray over it. If you have never shared with another person, maybe this small group time is your opportunity. Remember that secrecy fuels our anger. It may not seem fair to forgive others for the wrongs that they have done to you; but Jesus forgave you, and our job is to follow him. (See Student Response Sheet)
3. Maybe you’re not ready to forgive in your life yet. You know that you need to, but you’re just not ready yet. That’s okay. Pray that God would begin to soften your heart toward those who have hurt you. Share with a friend what is going on. Remember Ephesians 4:31-32. What do you need in order to be able to forgive the other person? Do you really need it? Or does it feel easier for you to stay angry? (See Student Response Sheet)
4. Go back to Andy Stanley’s four steps to working toward forgiveness. Take some time and think through each of them. Are there things from your past that you haven’t forgiven others for? Things you are ashamed of? Things *you* have done and need forgiveness for? Write it out then put it next to your bed so that each morning when you wake up this week you can remember the *choice* that you

made. To forgive yourself. To forgive those who have hurt you. (See Student Response Sheet)

5. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSE:

Destruction: Controlling My Anger

1. Have you ever lashed out at someone you love for no reason? If so, what happened? How did you feel about it afterwards? How do you think they felt afterwards?

2. Secrecy is the fuel for anger. Who are you really upset with? What do you really feel was taken from you? What is the root of your anger? Have you ever shared this with another person?

3. What are things that come to mind when you hear the word forgiveness? Is it a hard concept for you? Do you have questions about it like Peter did? Write down the things that come to mind. Maybe it's a person or event. Write it down and pray over it. If you have never shared with another person, maybe this small group time is your opportunity. Remember that secrecy fuels our anger. It may not seem fair to forgive others for the wrongs that they have done to you; but Jesus forgave you, and our job is to follow him.

