

SUB TOPIC THEME:
POWER: ANGER GIVES ME CONTROL

Lesson Objective:

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that anger does not actually give them control over their lives; rather it gives them the illusion of control and eventually isolates them from people who desire to build relationship with them as they struggle with uncertainty and transition. By helping military teens learn this distinction, our desire is that they would be able to live life with a little more certainty and stability because they develop something constant in their lives, friends.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. No equipment is necessary.
2. Make sure to print off copies of the Student Response Sheet ahead of time.
3. Have Bibles available and encourage students to bring their own.

Instructive Prep:

Many times we think that, even though we are angry, we are still in control. Mostly, this isn't true. Anger gives us the illusion of control. We stay angry because then we believe we can control who we become close with and that we can control who is able to know us and control how much we love and care for the people we meet, but our emotions are then actually in control of us.

On top of that, when we use anger to try to control our surroundings, it leads us into isolation. Anger keeps others away from us, but right now is when most military teens need others the most! Think about it this way; not only are military teens dealing with continuous uncertainty and transition, but they are also changing developmentally which would include the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual as well as the social. That's a lot of transition, and military teens have to do this with Mom or Dad sometimes in other places.

While at first it may seem easier to remain angry and distant, safer actually, the reality is that we are in need of community, and secluding ourselves off when we need others most leaves us hurting and afraid.

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 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:

You probably know what I'm talking about. You have just moved to another new place and you're not sure who you will end up being friends with or if you even want to go through this tough process of meeting, growing close with others and leaving again. It's just hard and you know it will probably happen over and over, so why try so hard again? It's simple. You choose not to. If you're lucky, you at least have siblings close to your age. They might get you, but even that is a stretch. So now you have a choice to make. Begin the process over again or hold people at an arm's length by making yourself look as big and as intimidating as you possibly can, many times by appearing and being the angry new kid you don't want to mess with. That works. Sort of.

Intro Story:

My friend Sammy was in a similar place. She had just PCS'd again. This was the third time in four years, but at least this last time she had been in the same place for two years. At first when she entered this new place she had been hesitant, but her Mom had been insistent that she get out there and make friends. She was really scared at first, but a few days into the new school year she met some other teens she really liked. From there their friendship grew. These girls did everything together; shared their lives, secrets, fears, hopes and dreams.

When the end of the school year came around, Sammy got nervous, afraid she would be leaving again, but she wanted to be strong, to finish her time there well as her Dad always taught her. You can probably imagine how excited she was when she learned they would be around for at least another year! That was a year ago now though. Another chapter closed, two years of memories fresh. Now she was in a new place, again, and didn't know if she could re-open herself up when she still felt so much hurt from leaving her friends behind.

Similar to last time and all the times before that, Sammy's Mom encouraged her to go out and make friends, to be brave and have fun at school. This place was much harder though. She was across the country, in a different place, different climate and it felt like everyone there already knew each other. So when the first person came up to say 'hey' and ask her if she had recently PCS'd, she snapped at him.

She could hardly believe what she had just done, but the words were already out there. She had never said anything like that before, and she didn't know what had come over her. She looked up, an apology on her lips, but the boy had already walked away.

Sammy went home disappointed that day. She tried to talk to her Mom about it, but she was too embarrassed, so the next day at school she just kept her head down and went through the motions. As Sammy's disappointment in herself grew, her anger grew too. One day she was sitting in a bathroom stall when some other girls walked in. She sat

there quietly waiting for them to leave so she could avoid them when she heard them start talking about her. Sammy told me that was the last straw for her. Looking back, she said they weren't even being particularly mean, just wondering aloud who she was, but Sammy got mean after that. Now on the off chance anyone did talk to her, she would challenge them, get in their face and tell them off.

It felt kind of good at first. Telling them what was up. Not needing anyone. Being the lone ranger. But after school when Sammy was home, strange things started happening. She started lashing out at her Mom, someone she had always been pretty close with. Intentionally finding ways to torment her little brothers and spending most of her time in her room with the door closed.

Years later when I met Sammy, I got to hear about this time in her life. She looked at me with tears in her eyes. She still hurt for that young lady she had been. Sammy had spent those next two years feeling very alone. She submerged herself in music and spent hours writing. She had to, to keep from feeling the intensity of the things going on inside her heart. When she got sick of her music and had nothing more to write, her emotions would drown her and she would cry herself to sleep. She even tried cutting for a while.

Sammy is not that same person anymore, but it took a lot for her to be able to crawl out. You can see how something like this can happen. Maybe you find yourself somewhere along this path. You can turn around at any point.

Anger and isolation go hand in hand. They sneak up on you, take you by surprise and find you when you least expect it. Sammy had no intention of choosing to live that way. It just happened. One day she woke up and didn't recognize herself. She didn't know how she had gotten there, and it took a lot of life reflection and intentionality to put her back in a place she wanted to be.

It started off with one comment unchecked, a fear of apologizing, and led to a false sense of power. Sammy thought she was in control of her emotions, but her anger was actually in control of her. She felt a sense of power when she told people off, but she was really isolated, alone and unhappy. She hurt the people around her whom she loved, her Mom and brothers; and because she had cut everyone off with her anger, she didn't have anyone to talk to about what was really going on in her heart. Sammy was upset about leaving friends she loved deeply. Not quite ready to jump in again. It's okay that she wasn't ready, but she let that take control of her life instead of moving slowly.

Intro Questions:

1. Have you ever had to leave good friends behind?
2. What helped you as you transitioned?

Personal Reflection Questions:

To determine in what order you should answer, snag a piece of each person's hair and go from shortest to longest.

As a group, take some time to go over the answers for each of these questions. Encourage each of the students to participate in sharing. While this may be a harder topic to talk about, being able to talk about these things can bring healing to places we didn't even know hurt.

1. When was a time in your life that you had to say good-bye to someone that you really loved? Maybe it was you Mom or Dad, a good friend, family you moved away from or a loved mentor. How did you handle it? Did you say good-bye, did you pretend it wasn't happening and never say bye? Did you write them a letter to share how much they meant to you?
2. Looking back, would you handle saying good-bye to a loved one differently? (Use Student Response Sheet)
3. Looking at Sammy's story, can you see how things just slowly spun out of control? What started it? How was it propelled further?
4. Have you ever found yourself in a situation similar to Sammy's? What were some of the things you felt going through it? Emotions can be hard to share because they make us vulnerable, but they also bring us closer together; don't be afraid to share the things that you felt. (Use Student Response Sheet)
5. Write your own questions:

Central Bible Passages:

This passage offers another example of a man who let anger creep into his life. Cain was giving some of his goods to God as an offering. Similar to his brother Abel, but God was pleased with Abel's offering and not with Cain's. When we look at this passage, we see that it was because Abel gave the best that he had while Cain gave something. There is a big difference between donating your old dirty shoes to someone in need and giving them the new pair you just bought. The first was easy, you were going to throw them out anyways, but the second took sacrifice.

I think it would be fair to say that Cain was probably disappointed in himself for not doing better, but the disappointment he had for himself turned into anger, and, as we have seen, anger sneaks up on us and controls us. He ended up killing his brother!

Check these verses out for yourself.

Genesis 4:1-16

Cain and Abel

Then Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she became pregnant. She bore a son and said, “By the LORD's help I have gotten a son.” So she named him Cain. Later she gave birth to another son, Abel. Abel became a shepherd, but Cain was a farmer. After some time Cain brought some of his harvest and gave it as an offering to the LORD. Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering, but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.”

Then Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let's go out in the fields.” When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him.

The LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

He answered, “I don't know. Am I supposed to take care of my brother?”

Then the LORD said, “Why have you done this terrible thing? Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground, like a voice calling for revenge. You are placed under a curse and can no longer farm the soil. It has soaked up your brother's blood as if it had opened its mouth to receive it when you killed him. If you try to grow crops, the soil will not produce anything; you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

And Cain said to the LORD, “This punishment is too hard for me to bear. You are driving me off the land and away from your presence. I will be a homeless wanderer on the earth, and anyone who finds me will kill me.”

But the Lord answered, “No. If anyone kills you, seven lives will be taken in revenge.” So the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who met him not to kill him. And Cain went away from the LORD's presence and lived in a land called “Wandering,” which is east of Eden.

Life Application:

1. While Cain was punished for the things that he did, God also promised him life. The same can be said of our anger. There are consequences for the things that we do, but when we take the hard steps toward admitting our faults and cleaning out

our hearts, God does promise us good things. Write out some of the different negative consequences you have found in your life because of anger.

2. Next write out some of the different areas that you believe will improve if you are able to release your anger.
3. What are different things holding you back from letting go of your anger? Write out the things that scare you about letting go. Are you afraid of the unknown? Afraid of giving up the illusion of control? Afraid to be vulnerable, yourself, known? Write it out. (Use Student Response Sheet)
4. Take your list of things holding you back and pray over it. Give these things to God. Matthew 11:28-30 reads, “Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.” God isn’t afraid of the things you will bring him. He wants to hold those things for you, to lighten your emotional load. Give them to him and pray for the courage to move forward. Write this prayer out and read over it each morning before you start your day. (Use Student Response Sheet)
5. Do you find yourself alone and isolated because of your anger? How did you get here? Do you want to move forward? How will you move forward? Take some time to think these things out, set measureable goals and share your thoughts with a trusted friend or mentor. (Use Student Response Sheet)
6. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSE:

1. LOOKING BACK, WOULD YOU HANDLE SAYING GOOD-BYE TO A LOVED ONE DIFFERENTLY?

2. HAVE YOU EVER FOUND YOURSELF IN A SITUATION SIMILAR TO SAMMY’S? WHAT WERE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU FELT GOING THROUGH IT? EMOTIONS CAN BE HARD TO SHARE BECAUSE THEY MAKE US VULNERABLE, BUT THEY ALSO BRING US CLOSER TOGETHER; DON’T BE AFRAID TO SHARE THE THINGS THAT YOU FELT.

3. WHAT ARE DIFFERENT THINGS HOLDING YOU BACK FROM LETTING GO OF YOUR ANGER? WRITE OUT THE THINGS THAT SCARE YOU ABOUT LETTING GO. ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE UNKNOWN? AFRAID OF GIVING UP THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL? AFRAID TO BE VULNERABLE, YOURSELF, KNOWN? WRITE IT OUT.

4. TAKE YOUR LIST OF THINGS HOLDING YOU BACK AND PRAY OVER IT. GIVE THESE THINGS TO GOD. MATTHEW 11:28-30 READS, “COME TO ME, ALL OF YOU WHO ARE TIRED FROM CARRYING HEAVY LOADS, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE AND PUT IT ON YOU, AND LEARN FROM ME, BECAUSE I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN SPIRIT; AND YOU WILL FIND REST. FOR THE YOKE I WILL GIVE YOU IS EASY, AND THE LOAD I WILL PUT ON YOU IS LIGHT.” GOD ISN’T AFRAID OF THE THINGS YOU WILL BRING HIM. HE WANTS TO HOLD THOSE THINGS FOR YOU, TO LIGHTEN YOUR EMOTIONAL LOAD. GIVE THEM TO HIM AND PRAY FOR THE COURAGE TO MOVE FORWARD. WRITE THIS PRAYER OUT AND READ OVER IT EACH MORNING BEFORE YOU START YOUR DAY.

5. DO YOU FIND YOURSELF ALONE AND ISOLATED BECAUSE OF YOUR ANGER? HOW DID YOU GET HERE? DO YOU WANT TO MOVE FORWARD? HOW WILL YOU MOVE FORWARD? TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK THESE THINGS OUT, SET MEASUREABLE GOALS AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND OR MENTOR.

6. WRITE DOWN GROUP MEMBERS' PRAYER REQUESTS:
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