

“Whom Have I in Heaven But You?”:
Praying Through Bitterness
Sermon Notes

➤ **East of Eden, our lives can become saturated with bitterness - so don't avoid or avenge it...learn to pray it**

**3 Steps from Psalm 73...*

1. Admit the cause of your bitterness (vv.1-14; James 4:1-2)

2. Embrace the cure for your bitterness (vv.15-22)

3. Enjoy God's care in spite of your bitterness (vv.23-28)

Next Week: Psalm 115 - “Our God is in the Heavens”:
Praying Through Addiction

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of August 16th-22nd

Getting Started

1. Of the infamous seven deadly sins (pride, envy, anger, greed, sloth, gluttony, and lust), anger is unique. Think about the biblical command found in Ephesians 4:26. Isn't it true that anger is the one deadly sin that if we only did it *better* we'd be far better off? Try inserting any one of the other seven sins from that list into Ephesians 4:26. Does the command still work? Why not? What's so special about anger?

Digging Deeper

2. What about you? What does your unrighteous anger typically look like? Do you tend to blow up or clam up? Do you spew or do you stew? As Robert Jones observes, sinful anger is a problem in all of our lives "Whether you simmer or strike out, whether you implode or explode...from red-hot rage to icy blue rejection."¹ Begin your group time by allowing one another into your experiences with this sin.

Open Your Bible to James 4:1-2...

3. The factors that drive anger are deep and powerful, but they are simple enough to understand. Like each and every sin problem in our lives, the heart of the matter is that the heart is the matter. What does James 4:1-2 tell us about what lies at the roots of unrighteous anger? How is it that James can liken this sort of anger to idolatry and even spiritual adultery (see vv.1-5)? Think back to your answer to question #2. How often do you conceive of your sinful anger using the images James provides? Though devastating, what sort of help and clarification do these truths bring to you as you wrestle with anger?
4. When we begin to recognize what our sinful anger does to us, it can be tempting to believe that God might cast us off even in our repentance. How does Psalm 73:21-24 speak to us in these moments? Or consider the promises offered to us in 1 John 1:8-2:2. This isn't just good advice, this is good news. Of the nine verses cited above, what one(s) bring you the most hope at this moment in your life? Why?
5. One biblical strategy in our battle to put our unrighteous anger to death is to learn to become slow to anger. Read through Proverbs 15:18; 16:32; 19:11 and James 1:19-20. How does these truths serve to motivate us to grow in Spirit-empowered patience? Is there one that speaks to you in particular? Which one? How come?
6. Another well-trodden scriptural pathway to killing our sinful anger is cultivating the grace of becoming soft toward others' anger. Take a look at Proverbs 15:1; 15:18; 20:2; 29:22; 30:33; Ephesians 4:31-32; 6:4 and Romans 12:17-21. What does it mean to be soft toward the anger of other people? Why is this so powerful? How might this be such a crucial (yet missing) tactic in our warfare?

¹ Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem*. P&R Publishing: Philipsburg, NJ. 2005. p.15.

7. One final approach in dealing with our sinful anger is simply to start to become a student of God's anger. We have a lot to learn in this area, and there's no shortage of biblical data for us to ponder: Exodus 32:9-10; 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 9:7-8; 29:23; 2 Kings 22:13; Psalm 7:11; 103:8-9; Mark 3:5; John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 2:4-5, 8; 5:9; 9:22; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; Hebrews 3:11; 2 Peter 3:9-10; Revelation 6:16-17; 19:15. How does God's anger work alongside his other attributes? How did anger manifest itself in Jesus' earthly life? What does the cross of Christ teach us about our anger and God's anger? What does the coming judgment teach us about God's anger?

8. Close your time as a group by praying through a combination of the points drawn from Psalm 73 in this past Sunday's sermon or perhaps some of the scriptures you're reflecting upon in what you've discussed in this study. Be especially attentive to those in your group who are currently struggling with manifestations of anger in their own lives and stand in need of your prayers, wisdom, and ongoing counsel.