

Anger Pandemic
Week 6: The Remedy

(Bill) Have you noticed how zombies have replaced vampires? And they couldn't be more different. Vampires were elegant, sophisticated. Count Dracula in his awesome but creepy castle, wearing a tuxedo to formal candle lite dinners. Those super good looking ageless vampires in those twilight movies. Zombies are mindless, gross, no rational thought, just creatures that are living, but dead.

Both spread a sort of poison that changes a person and then drives them to spread this to others. The path is filled with destruction.

In this series we have been talking about a particular type of poison that is spreading rapidly right now in our country and the destruction that it is leaving in its wake. You've seen it. **The anger, division, slander, creating enemies** who you must hate and actively fight against. And, in some cases, **the most angry and vocal are Christians.**

We have to identify the poison before we can know what the remedy is. Here's one of the verses we have used from the beginning. **⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
Philippians 4:5-7

What is it that we are to avoid? That's where we start to understand the poison. **This is the poison:**

The poison has several steps where it spreads through the person, getting worse as it spreads.

Fear and anxiety which leads to... When we are **afraid of losing something** or not getting something that we need, that is where fear and anxiety come. **Fear of loud noises, high places,** are hard wired into our brains to help

keep us safe. That **fight or flight response is God given**. But when we start to **live in that anxiety**, that is when anger starts to build.

Entitlement and anger, which produces...entitlement and anger is where **we stay in that fight or flight mentality**. We also believe that **we have a right to remain angry**. We don't feel like we should let it go because **we deserve to be proven right** and justice must be done on our behalf the way we think it should be done.

²⁰ **Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.**

It's too heavy. It's intended for **short bursts**, not a long sustained drive. We can't hold onto it and not sin. **It's poison**.

It's like those **western movies** where a rattlesnake bites someone in the leg. The hero rushes in, applies a tourniquet to keep the poison from spreading. Then he pulls out an impressive knife out of the sheath, slices open the wound, sucking out the poison.

If you and I are hiking in the wilderness and this happens, I'm probably going to say. It's been good knowing you. You've had a good life, but this probably isn't going to end well for you if I'm the one who is supposed to save you.

The question we are asking ourselves takes us back to the beginning. **What is really behind my anger?** If I find myself **constantly getting angry** or living with a short fuse, what is it that I'm afraid of or anxious about? That's the "aha" that we need. **It's not about, "hey just stop getting angry."**

This is really important because the next point is where the poison has spread and now your whole life takes on the flavor of it. This is what we call... **Bitterness**.

¹⁴ **Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.** ¹⁵ **Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous**

root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. Hebrews 12:14-15

The fear and anxiety leads to anger and, because you stay there, the poison spreads and your life is bitter, not sweet. This affects your physical and mental health. It colors everything around you. It affects all of your relationships and it makes it almost impossible for you to be an effective part of the body of Christ. This is where we spread the poison to others.

Deb is going to take us into the disease caused by the poison and then into the remedy.

- Throughout this series, we've characterized anger as a disease, an addiction, and now as a poison
- No matter how you want to describe it, there are none of those characterizations leave us unscathed
 - Disease and poison affect our physical bodies
 - Addictions not only affect our bodies, but our minds and relationships, as well
 - Story about the concoction I made my sister drink that made her sick
- Anger is a disease. It is a poison. It can be an addiction.

In the case of anger,

The disease causes...

Physical, emotional, and relational decay and...

- Physical effects:
 - Cortisol, adrenaline, and norepinephrine are produced
 - In a moment of crisis, this is a good thing
 - Sends blood to muscles and sensory organs
 - Puts us on high alert
 - "Fight or flight" (or freeze)
 - That's great for when a deer runs out in front of you or someone cuts in front of you at the store to grab the last turkey
 - The need for a response is gone fairly quickly, and your body can go back to "normal"

- When you are angry on a regular basis, your body continues to pump out those hormones
 - That is not good for you
 - Leads to: High blood pressure, weight gain, insomnia, higher risk of some cancers, heart disease, etc
- Emotional effects:
 - Always on edge, always stressed out and overwhelmed
 - Exacerbates mental health issues such as depression
 - More likely to see the negative in every situation and comment
 - More likely to take people's comments the wrong way, instead of giving them the benefit of the doubt
 - Harder to be joyful
- Relational effects
 - Being angry on a regular basis destroys relationships with others
 - It also creates a barrier that makes it harder to hear from God and to be transformed by the working of the Holy Spirit

Disunity in the church.

- Last week's message
- Unity in the church is a gift from God through Jesus.
 - God created all that is beautiful out of the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- The peace that He created is what holds us together.
- We are to maintain what He gave us.
 - If we don't put effort into maintaining unity, the church will fall apart
 - Entropy in the body looks/sounds like this: The body of Christ has a tendency to move from unity to disunity unless effort is applied to maintain unity
- Disunity/division is what will keep us from being the church and therefore keep us from the mission God gave us:
 - To love people the way Jesus did and still does
 - To make the kingdom present for others
 - To be disciples who make disciples.

- Ultimately, the enemy (Satan) is looking to steal what God has given and ultimately destroy what God loves.
 - The body of Christ. That's us.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10 NIV

- We've spent the last five weeks laying out for you what anger is, where it comes from, what Scripture tells us about holding on to anger, and the impact that holding on to anger has on us as individuals as well as on us as the body of believers
 - o Each week, we've also given you verses to read, things to ponder, and steps to take when you identify areas where fear and anxiety are controlling you and leading you down the path to anger and bitterness
- Now it's time to give you the antidote to the poison

Jesus teaches us the remedy

- o Last week (if you were here) you heard us say, "Jesus is the answer"
- o Jesus is always the answer
- o Jesus is the answer in each part of this remedy.
- o He shows us how to live the three godly attributes we're going to discuss in a culture where there is much of the opposite.
- o Jesus leads us **away** from the things that allow the poison to seep in, to destroy us, and spread it to others
- o Jesus leads us **to** the one thing that can cure what ails us. Himself.
- o Listen to what Jesus says to His followers:
 - He starts by inviting those who are weary and heavily burdened to find rest in Him
 - The anger we hold on to is a pretty heavy burden...
 - Then Jesus says--

Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29

Humility instead of entitlement

- It's a lot easier to live in this place:
 - I have the right to be angry, to be offended, and I must be vindicated, proven right.
 - This is entitlement.
 - This is a lack of trusting God to bring justice where there is injustice.
 - Because I want it done the way I want it and in my timing.
 - We avoid reading the verses that talk about how we are to leave it up to God to take care of bringing justice and restoring people, circumstances, and the world to the way they're supposed to be...
 - Your kingdom come...
- Humility is hard
 - It requires us to set aside all of our "I have the right" or "I deserve" thoughts and feelings
 - It requires us to put others' needs ahead of our own
 - James says it well.

¹⁹ Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰ Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. ²¹ So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. James 1:19-21

- o I never really noticed verse 20 before we started this series.
 - "Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires."
 - But now I can't unsee it.
 - My anger that I hold on to does not please God.
 - End of story.
- So what does that leave me with???
- James gives us a pretty good starting point—
 - "God gave us two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we talk."
 - Let go of all the things in your life that don't bring glory to God

- Humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts
- Will we humbly accept what Jesus wants to teach us?
 - If not, we cannot live humbly among others.
- Am I willing to let God be God and stay in my lane?
 - My lane is to be open to the moving and action of the Holy Spirit in me
 - So that I can be transformed a little bit more every day into someone who is learning to live and love like Jesus.
- Here's how Paul teaches humility to the Philippian church.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. But it's not really Paul teaching. It's Jesus who is the example of what humility looks like. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God,^[a] he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,^[d]⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:3

- Humility is vital
 - It not only tells us that we need to serve and not be served, to take the lower position...
 - It also communicates that we don't know the whole story of why that person did whatever they did that offended or hurt us.
- Illustrate this from your own experience.

Humility by itself will not completely get rid of the poison of fear, anxiety, anger, and bitterness...

(Bill) Forgiveness instead of bitterness This is where the root of bitterness can be cut. The ax falling on that root is forgiveness.

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:31-32

First look at the list of what we are to get rid of. "But I have a right to be angry because what happened to me was wrong. I need to fight back with harsh words and slander. This cannot go without a response."

But look at those words at the end that give **the why, the motivation** for forgiving what doesn't deserve forgiveness, but deserves punishment, **"just as God, through Christ, has forgiven you."**

It's for Jesus' sake that we forgive and it is only through this motivation that it can actually happen.

¹² Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. Colossians 3:12-14

Making allowance for others' faults takes us back to humility, because we don't know the whole story.

Forgiving takes some effort. This is how it has happened for me. Earlier in my ministry, there was a person who I worked with who was good to work with until I had to make decisions that he didn't like. These decisions affected him directly. I was asking him to make a sacrifice for the good of the whole.

What happened was **sabotage**. It began with an **angry outburst**, doors slamming, and progressed from there. **I was misrepresented** in many different settings. **Meetings** were undercut. What I didn't know until later was that it was **affecting my kids**. They were hearing stuff about their dad. **People who took his side** would champion his cause in front of church leaders and others outside the church.

I didn't know if I was going to make it. But anxiety about **whether I was of value and really up for the job** caused crushing fear. **That fear turned to anger.** I wanted others on my side. **I fought back, but even after still**

standing when the dust settled, I was filled with this sense of being wronged, offended, damaged. In short, I was still mad and **I was heading toward bitterness.**

Things came to a head when I was driving with Robin and a guy was riding my bumper on Joe Mann Blvd. Robin and I were talking about what was going on and how it was affecting me. I was such a mess that I was driving 25 mph. He blew by me, yelling something at which I sped up in order to get my 2 cents worth into his ear hole. Robin looked at me and said, "You need to take me home and get some help."

I worked through this with a Christian counselor and that was life changing. In one session, he challenged me to go back and work through **what was the essence of the offense.** The reason is that when you are living in anger, **you perceive so much that isn't real.** As I've said before of anger, you will perceive everything going back to this person. He or she was on the grassy knoll in Dallas, a part of the Kennedy assassination.

So I went back home and began to write in my journal. That's what I do. In the end I came up with **three real core, not imagined, offenses.** Then he instructed me that **now I was positioned to forgive.** You see **you can't forgive shadows, vague, he said she said.** You can't forgive a **moving changing target.** Once that is settled, then forgiveness would mean **beginning to pray for this person and decide that I don't need anything from him to make this right. I trust God for justice and grace.**

Peace didn't come in a minute, but it did come. And I am free.

Jesus teaches us the remedy. It is humility not entitlement, forgiveness not bitterness, and finally, **Love that is willing to sacrifice.**

Last week, we encouraged each other to commit to the willingness to sacrifice in order to maintain the unity we have in Jesus. We also challenged one another to be specific, if God was speaking about something to sacrifice.

This kind of sacrifice is a part of **Jesus' style of love.** The one who **gave up his rights and privileges** as God in order to provide a way for us to know God.

³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. **Just as I have loved you**, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 13:34-35

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, **you must give up your own way, take up your cross**, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. **But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.** ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Mark 8:34-36

Humility, forgiveness, and sacrificial love are about losing, not trying to win. This is how we lose our life to gain it. This is how we **lose our right to be vindicated** in our timing and the way that we want. **We lose that thing we want to hold onto that is way too heavy.** That thing that when we keep it close, it makes us bitter and we are destroyed. We cannot become the person God created us to be. This is how we **"take up our cross."** **We sacrifice for others for Christ's sake, because of our allegiance to him.**

This is what Jesus did for you. **Jesus is the source of the remedy.** Humility, forgiveness, and sacrificial love are all the essence of who Jesus is. I see your poison, but here is the remedy. **It's not a pill, an ointment and injection. It is a relationship with a person who is a king.**

I want to end this series in a way where we meet King Jesus, the remedy at the place where we are fearful, anxious, angry, bitter, sick and tired.

Here are the **Steps of Obedience:**

1. Humble yourself and ask God to meet you at your point of fear.

Are you filled with fear and anxious thoughts? Humble yourself and ask.

2. Receive God's anointing to forgive and love your enemies.

Ask people to stand if they would like to receive this anointing and prayer. **Is there forgiveness that I need to give?** It's gotten too heavy to carry the anger, resentment, and bitterness. **I want freedom.** To forgive is to

lose, to give up my right to win. **I relinquish any entitlement**, I have to see God bring justice the way I think it should be delivered.

There are enemies, either individuals or groups, that I have anger toward and I have invested much energy in fighting. Help me to love them and ask for your best for them, even though I will never agree with them.

We ask to be anointed for what we cannot accomplish in our own strength or ingenuity. We are asking about resurrection power.

(Anoint and pray for all who stand.)

3. Go and make the kingdom of God present for others.

Pray a prayer of commissioning to those who are to go make the kingdom present through humility, forgiveness and sacrificial love.

Anoint and pray for Tammy Skully.