

# LIVING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: RECONCILING RELATIONSHIPS

SERMON DISCUSSION FOR SUNDAY JUNE 21, 2015 | SPEAKER: PASTOR RON GORMONG

## SERMON DISCUSSION

**Ice Breaker (Everyone):** Who is someone you know that handles their anger very well? Why do you choose them?

## INTRO

Pastor Ron begins his message by explaining the current state of our country regarding anger. In a small study a professor found that 80-90% of his students had experienced thoughts of murder. He asked if they could write out their plans and many were extremely detailed. A national study found the anger in America has risen 10% in the last two years. In angry outbursts teens have destroyed property, threatened violence, and engaged in violence like never before. Even here in Spooner, WI as of late the anger has risen. Perhaps murder has even crossed the mind or hearts of individuals within our community.

**What do you think? Do you believe over the years that anger is “on the rise” in America? What about here in Spooner?**

Jesus’ public ministry is characterized by one specific phrase “Repent, for the Kingdom of God (or Heaven) is at hand.” Pastor Ron paraphrased Jesus saying “WITH ME—with MY COMING to THIS EARTH, GOD’S REIGN has BEGUN. It is BEING ESTABLISHED. LIVED OUT. ENJOYED.” And went on to comment that “His INFLUENCE is PERVASIVE and WILL GROW... by HIS GRACE. EVEN NOW.” But what does that look like? Jesus is about to lay down some practical implications.

## SCRIPTURE (VOLUNTEER TO READ)

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Mt. 5:21-22)

It is interesting that Jesus begins to share the spirit and fulfillment of the Old Testament Law to be lived out in a new way with *anger*. Dallas Willard suggests this is because most sin we commit flows out of a heart of anger. In the book of Genesis we read that the first murder resulted from the anger of Cain over his brother’s sacrifice. This goes back a long way.

**Anger in of itself is an emotion. It is not a “sin” to be angry. What, then is the connection between anger and sin?**

## THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Jesus' command seems over-the-top to us. Whereas the Old Testament law was to not murder—a statement creating a boundary that said “life is sacred”—this new command hits home for every human being on earth. And again, Jesus' commands are a picture of what the Kingdom of God is supposed to look like.

So what is Jesus' command exactly? We'll first take a look at what anger is and how it works.

Dallas Willard suggests that anger is a spontaneous response which happens when my will has been obstructed. This causes anger to rise up to three different levels. Each builds on the other and if not stopped leads to a spirit of murder.

**Level 1 Anger:** Plain anger which is noticeable to others. You hope that your anger is especially noticed by the person who has offended you.

**Level 2 Anger:** Anger that escalates to insult. There is a true story from the book The Telling Room which depicts an old woman in Sicily who would take upwards of six hours out of her day to climb a hill to a cemetery and return home. She wasn't visiting a love-now-lost however, she was visiting her hold enemy each day to spit on her grave. Be it a dirty look, the words you say, or the way you say them—this is Level 2 Anger.

**Level 3 Anger:** Anger that combines the first two levels—searing anger and freezing contempt. What does “you fool” mean? Scholars do not all agree on the exact meaning—but there is consensus that it means WAY more than you and I mean when we say “you fool” Closer likely is stringing together a list of expletives upon the person who has wronged you. At least in the moment you are hoping for the worst of all evils to be reigned down upon this person's soul.

**How would you describe what anger is?**

**Do you agree there are multiple levels of anger? Would you add any to this list?**

## EFFECTS OF ANGER

Level 1 Anger is liable to judgment. Presumably this is God's judgment because it is not illegal to be internally angry. Level 2 Anger is liable to the council. Level 3 Anger is liable to the hell of fire. Why is it such a big deal?

Timothy Peck suggests that just as an ambassador represents a country, so we represent God—being made in His image. If an ambassador is murdered not only is a human being dead, but an act of war against the ambassador's government has been made.

Pastor Ron's conclusion is that we cannot hide behind the old law anymore, saying “well it's not like I murdered him...” Because in God's new kingdom, it's a big deal.

## REFLECTION

Pastor Ron gives us a list of considerations regarding our anger and asked us to write down our answers:

1. Are you angry with anyone right now?
  - a. Your SPOUSE
  - b. FAMILY member
  - c. Co-worker
  - d. Boss
  - e. Friend
  - f. Fellow Christian
  - g. Someone here at church?
2. What is the level of your anger?
  - a. Level 1: Ill-will toward them?
  - b. Level 2: You want them hurting inside or out?
  - c. Level 3: You want them to be assaulted and injured?
3. Admit that it is not right to harbor anger toward another. Consider this from Pastor Ron’s sermon:
 

“This is NOT RIGHT. This is NOT OKAY. This is not KINGDOM OF HEAVEN LIVING. It’s not enough that I DON’T MURDER. God is CALLING ME to SOMETHING MORE, SOMETHING BETTER. I want to be open, by GRACE, to HIS SOMETHING BETTER for MY LIFE. I want the GOOD LIFE. And MY ANGER is NOT HELPING ME.

**Are these considerations enlightening to you? How so?**

#### SCRIPTURE (VOLUNTEER TO READ)

“SO . . . if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.” (Mt 5:23-26)

Pastor Ron posits that reconciling with someone you have a broken relationship with is more important than participating in a worship service. To reconcile is to restore relationship or restore harmony. And so if you want to fulfill the spirit of God’s new kingdom, reconciliation is the only way. In fact, you can take the first step. Don’t wait. Do what needs to be done.

Similarly, if you are in a secular setting such as a lawsuit decide to live out of this new heart. A lawsuit is an “old law” approach—eye for an eye. This is not the picture Jesus paints of the new kingdom He initiated.

**What do you think about these practical ideas for living out the Sermon on the Mount? Are they doable? Why or why not?**

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Don’t go on the attack when offended.
- Don’t run away or hide from tension.
- Don’t deny what has occurred.
- Do reconcile. Set up a time to meet. Jesus’ provides the grace for you to be able to offer grace.

**What are the long-term effects from each of the above methods?**