

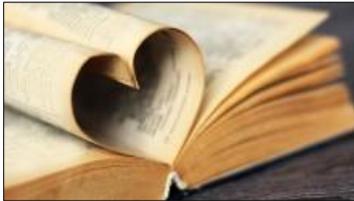
# Inside Out

## Putting Anger in Its Place

February 20th, 2022



**What consistently triggers your anger?** Well, we've been talking about love, hate, and anger *and* their somewhat surprising role in sound scriptural living. And we've been listening in on that seaside hillside as Jesus publicly teases out the finer points of righteous application of love, hate, and anger in order to equip His teenage apprentices before they're on their own, on *His* behalf.



Now, He doesn't downright *dismiss* our natural understanding of love, hate, and anger – **He builds on it. He gives it new context, meaning, and effect.** And like a great magician, He does it with a Bible that was in our hands the whole time; pointing out that **misunderstandings and misapplications all come from misuse of scripture.** And the dysfunctional demands of the religious rulers that weren't working to make *anyone* holy – were being wholly misquoted; “*Frankensteined*” together to serve the religious powers that be. Or rather, *shouldn't* be!



So, Jesus starts correcting and redirecting His hearers to a “rightly divided” understanding of Scripture that paints a picture of a God who is (surprise surprise) perfect. **A God who is consistently and concurrently loving, even in His hate and anger!** Because, as Bruce pointed out, Ecclesiastes points out:



There is a time for everything ... [for instance:] A time to love and a time to hate. – Ecclesiastes 3:1, 8 NIV



**Turns out, timing is everything.** Remember, a stranger stabbing you and taking your money might not look like love – until it's time for a life-saving operation and that stranger is a surgeon! So, before we react or respond to whatever, we need to pause, to read the room, to ask the Lord: **What time is it?** And in each situation, **what does godliness look like in this moment?** Mercy? Correction? Or Anger? You can do anger. There's an anger that you *can* do.



So let's take a closer look at ANGER. I'm passionate about this topic because *I'm kinda an expert on anger.* Because I have an intimate understanding of anger. Because I was *consumed* by anger. It kept me isolated, arrogant, and ruined a bunch of relationships, so yeah – I'm an expert... *How about you?* And we all really *need* to take a good long look at anger because our culture has a *misunderstanding* of it even though it's being *consumed* by it! *And yet*, like all sin, **the bad side of anger only survives in the dark and a little time in the spotlight thoroughly cleans things up.**



Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

– John 3:19-21 NIV



Now remember, anger can be *righteous* or *unrighteous*, and **I love the word that Bruce used for the sinful kind: insidious. Cuz it's insid'ous.** What a word! It just gives you chills doesn't it? It's just sounds so subtle, subversive, and snaky – *because it is!* **It's deceptively inoffensive, and can go unnoticed for ages as it gnaws away at you. And** it's an expert at disguising itself as righteous, making it oh so easy to ignore or justify. *Because...*



**Anger is a function of love.** Follow me on this. **Anger is simply defending something you love.** It's the protective response aimed at whatever is threatening an object of your affection. Dads – what would you do if you saw a bully push your little girl to the ground? **HULK SMASH!**

It's instinctual! **You see, without even trying, our anger provides an honest snapshot of whatever is in our heart.** So we have *no problem* advertising what we're angry about; and even like to raise our voice and make sure everyone can hear. However, that *doesn't* mean that what we love is always *good* or *right*. And yet, even *as* we understand *that* – we're burying the lead and missing a huge headline: **Anger reveals all our secret loves! It makes our heart completely transparent. But in a way that we're blind to!**



Just think about that time you were late for work and you got stuck behind that little old lady in her big SUV. **Hulk Smash! But what did she really do?** She threatened something. But what did she threaten? She threatened something you deeply and *secretly* love... *You!* Your time, your plans, and your pride of punctuality! *Oh, how dare she!*

And just like that – we can all see exactly how much I love each part of me. And *while* it's happening, **we don't even realize that we're broadcasting our deepest and darkest loves.** Giving everybody a good long look at our dark insid'ous by bringing it into the light outsid'ous. Because like it or not, **we are involuntarily volunteering our vulnerability.** And God made us this way:

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth *good things* [he loves and protects], and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth *evil things* [he loves and protects]. – Matthew 12:34-35 NKJ

See? Jesus knew this little life-hack and even tried to warn the bad guys that their heart was showing! *"Hey buddy, FYI, we can all see your heart... and it aint good."* And **Jesus Himself starts getting fired up because that's what good physicians do when they see a fatal heart condition!** But it's especially infuriating when the patient is belligerently ignorant. You see:

The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." – 1 Samuel 16:7 NKJ

On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. – Matthew 23:28 NIV [“Seriously man, your heart’s showing and the stuff you love is gonna kill you...” until you]

'... love [and protect] *the Lord your God* with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' [I mean after all] This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'you shall love [and protect] *your neighbor* as yourself.' – Matthew 22:37-40 NKJ

*Well there you go!* Case closed, Let’s pray, thank you and goodnight! Next stop – *your* heart; population – the Lord and your neighbor. Unless, there’s no room at the in -side of your heart. **Should we check for vacancy and see if we got anything insidious hiding insid’ous?** It’s surprisingly easy to take inventory on the things you truly *love*.



Running a “love check” is as simple as catching yourself getting angry and having the honesty and courage to ask yourself one question, **“What is it that I’m defending?”**



Mad about a Seahawks loss? *Yeah! It threatened my love of winning vicariously and thereby my undeserved sense of superiority – That stuff’s great!* Mad at Dairy Queen for running out of gravy: *You bet I’ll defend satisfying my appetites and cravings – I’ll die on that hill!* Mad at your kid for missing curfew: *Yup! I’m crazy protective of my child’s safety... Oh I guess that one’s righteous, huh? I knew I’m not all bad!*

Do you see what we have here?! We know the heart is deceitful above all else, but **anger gives us a tool for doing the impossible! It lets us see through the most guarded thing in creation and it gives us a good look at our true heart!** It shines a new light inside every one of us every day! And that’s HUGE because God’s whole plan hinges on what’s inside us.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice [defend the right thing], and to love kindness [because until you love the right thing you won’t defend it], and to [do that, we gotta] walk humbly with your God? – Micah 6:8 ESV

Because **God alone has a perfect heart. And so, the closest we can hope to come is when we imitate Him. Starting with His heart.** Because we can only do justice or learn to love by walking humbly with our Lord, *like* our Lord.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: [You taking notes?] Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger [as opposed to godly anger] does not produce the righteousness that God desires. [cuz we’ll be fervently defending all the wrong things]

And so **the big question is, how do we become slow to become angry?** Well, it's all about what we love most – **because anger is just a function of love** and if we love the right things, we'll be working with righteous anger. And how do we do that? Let James finish:

Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent [which is our love for ourself above all else] and humbly [here's how we walk humbly] accept the Word planted in you [always comes back to His Word in our heart], which can save you. Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. [which we all do! Learn to LOVE it! And then you'll] Do what *it* says. – James 1:19-22 NIV

[like:], putting away lying [especially to ourselves], "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," [the good treasure that pours out of the mouth from the heart that loves the truth] ... "Be angry, [defending and protecting the right things in the right way] and do not sin" [*that's* the anger we can do. Oh, and]: do not let the sun go down on your wrath – Ephesians 4:25-27 NKJ

Why do you suppose this means? Because trying to reconcile an angry dispute with somebody else before bed is likely impossible, impractical, and unwelcome. So **I don't think Paul's point is "beat the clock with your apology"** In fact, he's quoting Psalm 4:4 which clarifies this command:

Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. – Psalms 4:4 NKJ



**Even if it's the last thing you do in bed, take the time to get your HEART right!** Trying to reconcile an angry dispute before bed is often impossible but straightening out the motivation inside you is totally doable with a quick heart check! Just ask the Lord "What was I really defending?" "What was I protecting?" And if you get that right, you'll wake up refreshed, renewed and ready to defend the right thing; reconciliation. And justice. And kindness. All you need now is timing. And if the thing you love is too hard to let go of; rooted in ego, lust, or despair – take heart, because **God's solution isn't all about letting go. It's about receiving.** Receiving His love through His Word, which pushes everything else *out*. That's how God's love does what we can't.

**The very purpose of our Creator granting us life – is us learning to love our loving Father. Like our Father.** And that's a humble step-by-step process of knowing, growing, and showing God's righteous love, received piece by piece from the inside out.

**So don't forget that anger is a key component of the Gospel.** Jesus intervening down here was a defensive and protective act of love for *us*. And **He was so angry at the sin destroying us that He gave His life to kill it.** Which was necessary because our self-loving and sinful hearts need an extraordinary example to imitate and a remarkable reason to receive Him.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. – 2 Corinthians 4:16 NIV

So next time somebody sets you off and you start seeing red, **remember, your heart is showing.**