

SUB TOPIC THEME:
SEEDS: WHY DO I GET SO ANGRY?

Lesson Objective:

The purpose of this lesson is to recognize one of the places that anger comes from. Sometimes anger comes from the hurt we find in our lives, (as you will find in the online section), other times anger comes from unknown circumstances.

Typically when we get nervous we do one of three things whether we like it or not: we fight, take flight, or freeze. The question is what happens when we get stuck here? Often times we get angry at ourselves, the way we acted or didn't act. What's important to know is that this self-anger can be just as destructive as anger toward another person, because we are tearing ourselves down.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. No electronic equipment needed.
2. Red string and scissors for the Life Application section part 3.
3. Bibles for each student to actively engage the students.
4. Copies of the student response sheet; make sure to print them ahead of time.
5. A desire to help students find freedom from anger.

Instructive Prep:

Anger can be a tough thing. While there are lots of reasons for us to get angry at others, sometimes we forget to look at self anger. This small group material helps students work through their self-anger by introducing the topic, looking at what Scripture has to say, and allowing students to reflect and apply principles learned to life.

This session has a holistic design pulling in other people's life stories, allowing for personal reflection, and making space for communal sharing if desired. 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 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 student's lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together!

Intro:

Anger. We all have it at different points. We all feel the rage pulse through us at different times, but why do we get angry? I believe sometimes we get angry because of the expectations we have for ourselves. It's good to have high expectations; its okay to expect a lot from yourself and desire to do your best. You should. But you also need to have realistic expectations. You can't think you're going to run a marathon in under three hours without any training! It doesn't happen. Even worse, you can't get angry with yourself when you don't. Self-anger is destructive, but there are ways to develop resilience instead of negative attitudes and behaviors.

Intro Story:

I suppose an easy example of this in my life would be athletics. Think what you want, but golf is a sport. While it is not the most physically challenging sport I have ever played, it is the most mentally challenging sport I have ever played. I know a lot of high schools where military teens are don't have golf teams, but mine did!

It was my sophomore year of high school, at the beginning of the year, a fresh season of golf. We had a tournament over the weekend, one I was excited to play in. I wasn't the best player, but I got to go to this one Varsity invite because we were down a golfer. To me this was my chance to show my coach how good a player I could really be. I expected things to be good. I would stun them with my amazing long drive. Astound them with my quick and accurate reads of greens, and I would come walking in with the best score on the team - just a handful over eighty. Maybe even break 80!

As you can imagine, it didn't quite go that way or this couldn't be an anger story. On hole 14, with four more holes to go, I had just one more golf ball left. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the sport, that means if I started out with just 15 golf balls in my bag, a low guess, I had already lost 14 golf balls which adds at least 14 penalty strokes to my total score. Not a part of my plan. I was well on my way to shooting triple digits, and I was so mad at myself! How had it happened?

Have you ever heard of fight or flight? I like to also include freeze. Often this is referred to when something scary or unexpected happens; people usually either jump into action, run away, or just freeze. Well, in this case I was a fighter, not the positive fighter that encouraged myself to a miraculous save in just four more holes, but a negative fighter that beat myself up mentally for 18 long holes or five and a half long hours. Of course I didn't play well! I was too angry at myself! Angry at my game, at my negative attitude, angry I couldn't change my attitude; angry at another penalty stroke and angry I had ever even believed I was a good golfer! I had piled the anger on myself all day long!

Maybe you know what I'm talking about, this mental meltdown. You might not be a fighter. Maybe you are a freezer or someone who takes off when things get tough. No matter which of the three you are, I am sure you have been disappointed in yourself for acting the way that you did when things got tough. Self anger. How does it happen? For me that day, it happened one shot at a time. You see, anger builds up over time. I got nervous on my first tee shot, and the ball flew way left. There had been people watching,

so it was understandable, I just had nerves. I was upset, but I moved on, finished one over on the first hole. Second tee shot, same thing - lost it left. Now I was upset again, although I should have learned from the first time! Then my second shot from same tee; same thing! Chunking short shots, misreading greens, hitting golf balls into the water, lost balls, penalty stroke on top of penalty stroke. Four and a half hours later on the 14th hole, down to my last golf ball, steam flying out my ears, I was furious with myself.

It wasn't just the bad shots; it was the negative things I was telling myself after each bad shot. "Rachael, that could have been better!" "You forgot to keep your head down!" "What? Have you never played golf before?" "Rachael, that was stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid!" "You suck!" With every shot I got a little more upset until I was raging. The rage clouded my thinking and my game just kept getting worse.

Later that night I went and talked to my Dad about it, and he helped me put things into perspective. My goal was to come in one day and shoot low 80s, but I had never broken 92 in a tournament. Oh! Did I forget to tell you that beforehand? It was sort of an unrealistic goal. Oh! And I hadn't practiced all summer, but I magically thought I would suddenly get better as a player because my coach put me in a Varsity tournament once because she had nobody else. These things don't happen! My goals were unrealistic, but I didn't want to believe that, so my anger raged. I got mad at myself and began tearing myself down mentally. I had wanted to drop strokes that day based on sheer will power! It did *not* happen.

Maybe you have felt that way too. It probably wasn't golf. Maybe for you it was dance, football, a test you hoped to pass after never even taking your book home to study and goofing off in class. Instead of getting angry with yourself when things don't go your way and having unrealistic expectations, why not start changing your behavior. Set small goals, work your way to the bigger ones, and slowly work your way in another direction. Get friends to help you with these new goals. Maybe you are upset about where you are, but you don't have to stay there. One of the best things you can do when you find yourself in this position is to seek wisdom. Talking to my Dad afterwards was a really good choice, because he gave me good insight, helped me to see how I could have been better and helped me to set more realistic goals. Imagine if I had talked to him before all of this! I could have saved myself some frustration, anger and probably golf balls!

Now when I get upset about things, and believe me, it still happens, I do things differently. I ask myself this set of questions:

1. Check yourself: should I be angry, or am I just hungry, tired, stressed or something else?
2. Is this a realistic expectation? If you don't know ask a friend or mentor for guidance.
3. If it's not, what small goals can I make to get to my larger one?
4. If it is and I'm just not getting it, step back, breathe and try another way.

Perspective is everything. When we're up close to something, it's hard to see what's really going on, but when we step back, we see the bigger picture. Then I pray, for clarity, expansion of the mind and for God to guide me, give me his wisdom, and help me to think before I speak. There is just about nobody tougher on me than me. It can be a good thing, but it can be a hurtful thing. God doesn't desire for us to

spend our lives beaten down. There may be seasons of struggle, but we need to change the way we think. Whether you are a fighter, someone who takes flight or freezes, it's just how you are wired. Be aware and don't be hard on yourself when your body naturally reacts. Be proactive and shift your thinking. We can't succeed when we have already beaten ourselves down.

Introduction Questions:

1. Were you able to relate to the fear or self-anger the author shared in her story?
2. What's your natural tendency, fight, take flight or freeze? Do you get angry with yourself when you do those things?

Personal Reflection Questions:

To start off, ask the group to share which one of the fight, flight or freeze they believe that they are, something simple to ease into deeper conversation. Don't be afraid to push students a little if you have relationship with them. As their leader you probably have more influence than you realize.

1. Of the fight, flight or freeze, which is your natural tendency? What are some positive things about your reaction? (See Student Response Sheet)
2. When are different times self-anger has come up in your life? (See Student Response Sheet)
3. Has your self-anger ever stopped you from doing something you wanted to?
4. How can you begin to change your behavior?
5. How do you think God would desire you to act in the different situations you find yourself in?
6. Write your own questions:

Central Bible Passages:

These following verses give us an idea of what God thinks about our anger. First the Psalm tells us that anger only leads to trouble or more complicated situations, something we can all look back in our own lives and see. The next passage talks about how God desires for us to live. Anger is a part of our old lives; as Christ followers now, God calls us to live a different way. And finally remember that God loves us, even when we struggle with self-anger.

Psalm 37:8

Don't give in to worry or anger; it only leads to trouble.

Colossians 3:5-17

The Old Life and the New

5 You must put to death, then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions, and greed (for greed is a form of idolatry).

6 Because of such things God's anger will come upon those who do not obey him. 7 At one time you yourselves used to live according to such desires, when your life was dominated by them.

8 But now you must get rid of all these things: anger, passion, and hateful feelings. No insults or obscene talk must ever come from your lips. 9 Do not lie to one another, for you have put off the old self with its habits 10 and have put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in his own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of himself. 11 As a result, there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, and free, but Christ is all, Christ is in all.

12 You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. 14 And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. 15 The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. 17 Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.

Romans 1:7

And so I write to all of you in Rome whom God loves and has called to be his own people: May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Life Application:

1. Anger can be a tough thing to monitor because it feels like it comes on so suddenly, but the truth is that it boils below the surface for a while before showing up. Think back in your life; when are two different times you have been angry. Were there warning signs? We may not see them coming now, but we can look for the warning signs in our past to help us conquer anger in our future. Write these warning signs down and choose two things to pay attention to in the future.

2. Ask Christ to help you conquer your self-anger. Write out a prayer, tell him your tendencies and share with him your desires for change and growth. Ask him to guide you. Pray over this prayer each day this week before you start your day. (See Student Response Sheet)
3. Grab some red string from your leader and tie it around your wrist. Let this be a reminder for you as long as it lasts to work through the questions shared in the introduction story. Remember that these questions are designed to help you evaluate if you have realistic expectations or not. The last thing we need is to be angry at ourselves when our task is impossible to begin with.
 - a. Should I be angry? Or am I just hungry, tired, stressed or something else?
 - b. Is this a realistic expectation?
 - c. If it's not, what small goals can I make to get to my larger one?
 - d. If it is and I'm just not getting it, step back, breathe and try another way.
4. What are different action steps you can take today to help you to love yourself better, be angry less and remember God's word?

STUDENT RESPONSE:

1. What's your natural tendency, fight, flight or freeze? Do you get angry with yourself when you do those things?
2. When are different times self-anger has come up in your life? How have you handled it?
3. Looking at Colossians 3:5-17 write out some of the differences you see between the life that we lived before Christ and the life God wants us to live now. Which life are you really living and where should you be?

