

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

AN EXPLORATION OF THE
SEVEN GLITTERING VICES

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS
ANGER

Glittering Vices and Fatal Attractions: The Seven Deadly Sins as Soulcraft for the Season of Lent

Introduction to the Seven Deadly Sins:

Christians recognize that sin is a vandal of everything good that God created. It spoils people, wrecks lives, disturbs relationships and ravages whole societies. It is out of concern to know and enjoy the good we were created for that we look at sin. *The entire focus of using the seven deadly sins is to examine our hearts - to name those patterns and habits that rob us of goodness and life, so that we can be healed and freed of them, so that we can receive Christ's full life.* We do not aim to obsess about sin but to catalyze spiritual growth - to fix our eyes on Jesus and pursue his Kingdom, and along the way throw off the sin that so easily entangles us (Heb. 12:1).

Suggestions for Scripture Reading:

As you read scripture passages, do so slowly, meditatively, listening for the ways God may be addressing your life. Here are a few ways to do that: 1) Take a moment of quiet to still your heart, 2) Read through the scripture passage, listening for a word, thought, image or phrase that grabs your attention, 3) Read through the passage again, listening for the way the word connects with your life. Share with God any feelings that have surfaced in you, asking God any questions you have.

Anger:

"Anger is probably the most misunderstood of all of the deadly sins. When we deliberately use our words, actions or silence as a weapon to hurt people's feelings or destroy their property, then we have placed ourselves in the devil's furnace of anger. This should not be confused with the just anger that is the prophet's fire that stands boldly for what is right. Righteous anger and just anger bravely confronts the individual, corporate and national evil in the world." (Albert Hasse, Coming Home to Your True Self) Anger can be further complicated by the fact that it is often rooted somewhere else, namely in rejection or resentment or jealousy and by the way in which it often proceeds to express itself in yet further expressions of unkindness, paranoia, vengeance and violence. Any serious Christian consideration of anger must take into account the way in which the scriptures describe God's anger in and through the story of Israel, as well as how anger was expressed by Jesus, who seemed comfortable to express anger in various situations. The Apostle Paul encourages the early Christians to be careful not to let their anger become sin. All of these things lead us to believe that some forms of anger are at least acceptable and at best good gifts from God and therefore appropriate human expressions. Still it seems important not to forget that when we are reflecting on anger we are somehow dealing with the great tension between self destruction and deep goodness.

Monday

Scripture: Genesis 4:1-15

Reflection:

"The sin of anger or wrath arguably causes more harm in our world than all of the other sins combined When anger shows up it often takes over." ~ Michael Mangis

"Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back--in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you." ~ Frederick Buechner

"One man may be so placed that his anger sheds the blood of thousands, and another so placed that

however angry he gets he will only be laughed at. But the little mark on the soul may be much the same in both. Each has done something to himself which, unless he repents, will make it harder for him to keep out of the rage next time he is tempted, and will make the rage worse when he does fall into it." ~ C.S Lewis

Prayer: Lord, as I meditate on this scripture please speak to me. Speak to me about the anger of Cain. Speak to me about my own anger. But most of all, speak to me about your grace which is able to overcome even my most violent anger. Amen.

Tuesday

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-32

Reflection:

"Sinful anger is the womb from which feelings of revenge and retaliation are born. Its manifestation is unique in each person's life. If unbridled, rage causes others to scramble; if harboured within and nursed, it can seethe and hiss like a snake filled with the venom of resentment. Often it refuses to recognize the presence and dignity of the other." ~ Albert Hasse

"Anger toward people with whom we have close relationships is never simple. There are always old wounds, unresolved tensions and other complications which enter into the equation." ~ Michael Mangis

Prayer: Spirit of God, who gives relationships and communities value and purpose, help me to dwell less and less on my angry frustration with others and help me to focus more and more on the forgiveness of Jesus.

Wednesday

Scripture: James 3:1-11

Reflection:

"James wants us to recognize that what we say in anger can determine our destiny. There are consequences to what we say and do in the expression of anger... I can think of no more evil way to handle anger than to displace it — in other words, to take out our anger on the innocent." ~ Tony Campolo

"In my day to day life I may deal successfully with the normal kinds of anger, but if I turn my back on it at the wrong moment, it will lash out again." ~ Michael Mangis

Prayer: Lord God, Creator of heaven and earth who makes every person in your image, I surrender to you the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart to you today. Make them beautiful so that they will be pleasing to you and a source of blessing and life for everyone I speak with. Amen.

Thursday

Scripture: Psalm 103:8-12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Reflection:

"We claim Christ's mercy, not because the Father is angry and stern and needs to be appeased. Our direct access to God is based on the Father's love. As the apostle Paul said, "the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom 8:15). Jesus didn't die "to change God into love; he died to tell us that God is love. He came, not because God so hated the world, but because he so loved the world." ~ Douglas Webster

"When a person is loved, there seems to be little room for anger in his life. Love drives anger out of his mind and heart, for life is too wonderful to allow anger to creep in and spoil it." ~ Tony Campolo

"Whereas wrath is rooted in pride, the strength of gentleness and the steadfastness of love in the face of adversity are rooted in a deep trust in God to handle things." ~ Rebecca Konyendyk DeYoung

Prayer: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teach me to trust so deeply in your love for me that it will become more obvious to my heart that other, darker ways of living are empty and hollow. Amen.

Friday

Scripture: John 2:13-17

"Anger, when it is a holy emotion, has justice as its object and love as its root ... vicious anger, by contrast, is self-regarding and selfish. The wrathful seek revenge, not due punishment; they protect their own honor and cause at all costs, instead of defending what is truly good or deserved. Unhinged from justice, bad anger aims at another's injury rather than another's good." ~ Rebecca Konyendyk DeYoun

"Righteous anger and just anger bravely confronts the individual, corporate and national evil in the world." ~ Albert Hasse

Prayer: Jesus, shine light on my selfish ways and replace them with your mind and your heart for the broken and misguided practices of the church and the world. Amen

Saturday

Scripture: Esther 4:1-16

Reflection:

" Let us add to the list of sinful forms of anger the sin of obsequiousness. This sin is characterized by an inordinate rejection of anger and a refusal to take responsible dominion in the world. Some people have been taught they should never experience anger. Often the message came from those in power who did not want their power threatened. The sin of obsequiousness leads one to passively invest authority in others and to make decisions based on how they might affect relationships rather than on discernment of right and wrong ... They allow their God given voice to be silenced." ~ Michael Mangis

Prayer: Dear God, who is Lord over all the universe, forgive me for shying away from difficult circumstances and fill me with courage to be involved in the costly situations where the rightness of your kingdom and the well being of people are at stake. Amen.

~

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION:

1. What role does anger play in your life? Have you been more often at the giving end or the receiving end of anger? How has this shaped your life?
2. What are the roots of your anger? What forms of anger come too easily to you? What forms of anger might God be calling you to feed rather than to avoid?
3. Read and reflect on Proverbs 16:32. What are the key ways for taming or controlling our anger?
4. Identify and discuss some of the key examples/expressions/themes of anger in our culture and in the world?
5. Reflect on "change" and "loss" as a sources or causes of anger.
6. What does "passive anger" look like ? Why is this so prevalent?
7. Think about anger as a gift. How do you understand the positive, necessary role of anger in human life? Why does anger seem to go off the tracks so easily and lead to evil outcomes?
7. Meditate on the notion of God's anger (ie Psalm 103:8 -12 / Psalm 30:5) How is anger a redemptive or renewing force?
8. Where might God be calling the church to exercise a holy anger these days? What are the challenges here ?
9. Revisit and reflect on Genesis 4. What is the main message of this story? Where does the spirit of Cain exist today? Where do you find yourself in this scripture? How is this a story of grace?
10. Why do think that love and being loved is the solution to anger?