

“YOU MAKE ME CRAZY” Disarming the Button-Pushers
Proverbs 12:16, 16:32, 25:28 (*Adapted from the Rick Warren Series*)
September 30 & October 1, 2017

“Two friends, Bill and Tom, were drinking at an all-night café. They got into a discussion about the difference between irritation, anger, and rage. At about 1 A.M., Bill said, ‘Look, Tom, I’ll show you an example of irritation.’

“He went to the pay telephone, put in a coin, and dialed a number at random. The phone rang and rang and rang. Finally when a sleepy voice at the other end answered, Bill said, ‘I’d like to speak to Jones.’

‘There’s no one here named Jones,’ the disgruntled man replied as he hung up.

“That,’ Bill said to Tom, ‘is a man who is irritated.’

“An hour later, at 2 A.M., Bill said, ‘Now I’ll show you a man who is angry.’ He went to the phone, dialed the same number, and let it ring. Eventually, the same sleepy voice answered the phone.

“Bill asked, ‘May I please speak with Jones?’

“There’s no one here named Jones,’ came the angry reply, this time louder. The man slammed down the receiver.

“An hour later, at 3 A.M., Bill said, ‘Now I’ll show you an example of rage.’ He went to the phone, dialed the same number, and let it ring. When the sleepy man finally answered, Bill said, ‘Hi, this is Jones. Have there been any calls for me?’”¹ You laugh, but imagine your receiving those calls?

What do you do when the crazy-makers in your life come after you to make your life crazy? One of the amazing things about the crazy makers in your life is how quickly they can flip you from being happy to angry. One morning you can be perfectly at peace, enjoying the beautiful day, looking at all of God’s marvelous creation, and all of a sudden this crazy maker walks into your life and in about 2 seconds you’re frustrated and mad and upset. They can flip you so fast because they know how to push your buttons.

So if we’re going to deal with healthy relationships, we’ve got to learn how to deal with anger – how it shows up, how to deal with it in our lives, **and** how to diffuse it in the lives of others, especially those crazy makers who push our buttons to flip us out. Let me give you some preliminary information:

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg. 11-12)

On the average a woman loses her temper **three** times a week. On average a man loses his temper **six** times a week. The woman gets angrier with people while the man gets angrier at things. Women are more verbal in their anger while men are more physical with their anger. It's pretty common knowledge. But did you know that single adults express anger twice as much as married adults? And the place where we get angry the most is at home, because we get angry more often, more intensely at those we love than strangers. The people who make you the angriest are those you love the most, because they have the greatest potential to hurt you or offend you or to irritate you or frustrate you.

But there are times when anger is an appropriate response for us. Uncontrolled anger is never right, but anger is **not** always wrong. There are times when anger is the only appropriate response. If someone tries to hurt my kids or my wife or family, I'm going to get angry. That's an appropriate response. If I don't get angry it means I don't love, I'm apathetic. And there are things that we OUGHT to get angry about: injustice in the world, the greed of people, the affluence of racism, when children go to bed hungry at night and others have so much they waste it (they even feed their dogs better than some people are being fed today), when people are raped, or abused – these are things that should make us angry, and rightly so for they are wrong! Anger is an evidence of love, loving one so much that you want to care for them and seek the best for them. And God gives us the ability to be angry at the things that are wrong. In fact, 375 times in the Bible it says God got angry, or Jesus got angry, or the Holy Spirit got angry. There are some things that are definitely wrong and we ought to be angry about them, too. So there is righteous anger and there is unrighteous anger, and that's what we'll cover today.

Ephesians 4:26 tells us “When you get angry do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” So there is a way to be angry and yet not sin, and there is a time to be angry and not sin. Selfish anger is sinful. Self-centered anger is sinful. Uncontrolled anger is sinful. But the Bible tells us that there are righteous times for us to be angry that are not sinful. Sometimes anger is helpful, but most often it is not.

I invite you to look carefully at these verses out of Proverbs. Proverbs 25:28 says this: “If you cannot control your anger, you are as helpless as a city without walls, open to attack.” Do you realize when you say,

“You make me so mad,” you are admitting at that point that those people are controlling your life? You are telling them that they have the power to control your life and that you are defenseless to stop them. That’s what you’re telling them! You have no walls of protection against them.

Proverbs 12:16 says this: “A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted.” It’s wise to let it just roll off your back. A wise person stays calm when insulted.

Proverbs 16:32 tells us, “It is better to be patient than powerful; it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city.” In other words, it’s better to be in control of your own emotions than to be in leadership positions. Self-control is the most important thing when it comes to dealing with crazy-makers.

Did you know that anger is a learned response? You learned it from someone. In their bad example to you, you saw that example and it was passed on to you. You learn it from television, from movies, from other people in your lives, and especially from your parents. But, since anger is a learned response, IT CAN ALSO BE UNLEARNED. You can learn appropriate ways to deal with your anger. So what I’d like to do today is 1) help you to understand the different ways that anger shows up, for there are several different ways that anger is demonstrated, and then 2) share some biblical principles on how you diffuse the angry crazy makers in your life – how to disarm them.

Let me share 4 different ways that anger is expressed. Please follow your note sheet. Let’s use some common names for them.

1) The first category of how people express their anger is the Machine Gun. The machine guns are the people who just let you have it! They mow you down. There’s no doubt to their anger. They’re very expressive. They cuss, they yell, they throw things, they hit, they let it fly. These are the explosives. They are the walking time bombs, just waiting for their hairpin triggers to be pulled and they go off. Folks like Woody Hayes, once coach of the Ohio State football team. At one Gator Bowl, when an opponent caught an interception, he got so angry he walked out onto the field and slugged the kid! And he immediately resigned. It ended his career right there.

The Bible has this kind of anger in Genesis 4:5. Cain and Able were the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain

committed the first murder out of anger at God and his brother. “*Cain became furious and he scowled in anger...and while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Able, and killed him.*” **ATTACKED** is the key word here. This is the response of the machine gunners. They let ‘er rip, and then they immediately regret it. They regret the things they’ve said or done and they are often embarrassed, ashamed and they want to apologize.

2) **The second kind of anger is affectionately known as **the Mute**.** The mute is the exact opposite of the machine gunner. They don’t blow up; they clam up, they get silent, they hold it in and they live in denial and they pretend they’re not angry. This type of anger is the crock-pot anger. It stews and it’s a slow burn.

Mutes swallow their anger. And even though they don’t express it, it tells on them. Every time you swallow your anger, your stomach keeps score. If you don’t talk it out, you’re going to take it out on your body. So people who hold onto their anger experience high blood pressure, chronic pain, tension headaches, ulcers or all other anger related affects to their bodies. Dr. S. I. McMillen has identified 51 illnesses that can be directly attributed or caused by anger.

The prophet Jeremiah is a good example of a mute. He held in his anger. He’s known as the “weeping prophet” because he cried a lot. *Jeremiah 15 says, “I stayed by myself and was filled with anger. Why do I keep on suffering? Why are my wounds incurable? Why don’t they heal?”* Holding in anger wreaks havoc on our bodies because it’s eating you alive. If you’re holding onto anger, your body will express it.

So we have the machine guns and the mutes – one violent and the other silent. One blows up and the other clams up

3) **The third kind of anger response is **the Martyr**.** The martyrs are pros at holding pity parties. They are always passive and they tend to punish themselves. When a crazy maker comes into their life they don’t think, “That person is crazy.” They think, “What’s wrong with me? What did I do wrong? It must all be my fault.”

If you walk around saying I should, I must, I have to, I ought, and you’re always *shoulding* yourself, then you’re going to be the martyr because you’re going to blame yourself. The crazy makers are all around

you, but you take the blame for it – it has to be your fault somehow. And the number one sign that you have the martyr approach to anger is depression. Depression is caused by a variety of things, but one of the primary causes of depression is frozen anger. When you hold onto anger and you let it freeze in your life and you make yourself a martyr you're going to get depressed.

A good example of a martyr in the Bible is the older brother in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. Jesus tells about a man who has two sons; the youngest asks for his part of the inheritance and then goes off and foolishly throws it all away in wild living. Then he comes home a genuine mess but dad throws him a party. Unconditional love welcomed him home again. But the older brother gets ticked off. "I'm the good son who hasn't run off and wasted half of the family treasure, but you've never once given ME a party." Getting mad, this son becomes a martyr in his anger.

Luke 15:28 tells us, "The elder brother was so angry he would not go in (to the party). So his father went out and pleaded with him..." Folks like this make everyone miserable. They have to be coddled, or coaxed, or pleaded with, or we have to pamper them. If they aren't happy, no one else is either. And that's just as wrong as the machine gunner.

4) **The fourth kind of anger is the Manipulator.** The motto of the manipulator is "Don't get mad; get even." There's so much in our media today that displays this mentality. The manipulator **will never** tell you to your face that their angry with you, but they will express their anger subtly. They're going to do it slyly, or sarcastically, or indirectly with jibs and cuts. They do their best to sabotage everything you're doing, but you'll never catch them at it. It's all cloak and dagger stuff that is meant to get you back for what was done. And they can say the most hurtful stuff, but they follow it with words like, "I'm just teasing" or "can't you take a joke?" But they aren't joking. They mean every bit of that cutting remark or sarcastic comment. They're out for you.

Now, sadly religious people can be really good at being manipulators. They frame everything in spiritual terms. You ever hear someone say, "I was grieved in my spirit?" What that means is that they were ticked off, but they didn't want you to know so they could get back at you. Or maybe you've had someone say something nasty to you and follow it with the words "Bless your heart!" That really doesn't mean anything, but

if they can spiritualize it, then the stab in the back looks better for them. There are many folks who are not here anymore because they got ticked off at someone here and they haven't resolved the anger. They take it out on the church instead of working it out with the other person. And the other person might not even know it.

The Pharisees were master manipulators. Luke 6:10 tells us that they were so mad that Jesus was popular and they weren't that in verse 11 it reads, "They were furious and began to plot with each other what they might do to Jesus." They were plotting how to get even with Jesus.

Now all four of these ways, whether you are a Machine Gun or you are a Martyr or you are a Manipulator or you are a Mute, you learn how to get angry that way. It's not helpful because none of those ways are actually helpful at all. They all cause great damage. YOU CAN UNLEARN THEM but it takes time and the desire to do it!

So how do we go about disarming the person who uses these against you? How do you deal with the crazy makers who push your buttons? How do you deal with your own anger and not strike back? And how do you deal with their anger when they won't come out and tell you that they're angry with you? How do you disarm the button-pushers?

The Bible has 5 really good practical things to help out, and they come from Proverbs.

1) The first way to disarm your button-pusher is Calculate the cost of your anger. Before you retaliate to the crazy-maker, calculate what you're going to lose if you let your anger out. There is always a price tag for getting angry back at that person and if you can calculate the cost of your anger before you let it go, you'll be less likely to respond.

Here's what uncontrolled anger does: Proverbs 29:22 says "An angry person causes trouble, and a person with a quick temper sins a lot." When you respond to the crazy maker in anger, you're going to have more trouble and you're going to sin so much more, so don't do it.

Proverbs 15:18 tells us, "Hot tempers cause arguments." Any time you get angry, there's going to be arguments. No anger, no arguments!

Proverbs 14:29 says "Anger causes mistakes." Who thinks clearly when they're angry? Mistakes!

Proverbs 14:27 says “*People with hot tempers do foolish things.*” So if I get angry here’s the cost: I’m going to get into trouble; I’m going to sin; I’m going to cause arguments; I’m going to make mistakes; and I’m going to do foolish things. Anger always has a cost to it, and the cost is high. I never win when I lose my temper. I can lose my respect, I can lose the love of my family, I can lose my job, and I can lose my health. Please don’t use anger to try to motivate people, because anger will never bring about a positive end result. How many kids have been alienated from their parents because of uncontrolled anger? How many husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, or close friends have been alienated because someone lost their temper? Anger destroys relationships faster than anything else.

So before you retaliate to the button-pusher who is really getting you upset, STOP and THINK about the end result if you decide to return their anger. Think of the mistakes, the sin, the foolish actions, the arguments that could come. You don’t want them, so keep your cool. **Proverbs 14:29** says this: “*Those who control their anger have great understanding; those with a hasty temper make mistakes.*” You must calculate the cost of your anger. Don’t get angry **back** when the button-pusher goes at it.

2) Number 2 in disarming the button-pusher is **Look past their words to their pain**. Now I talked about this last week, but it is important to hear again. We must look beyond the words of a person in order to find the hurt behind the words. What is the pain that is causing the words? Don’t respond to their words, but look closely at that’s going on in their life behind the words.

Proverbs 19:11 tells it clearly; “*A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*” Be patient and careful enough to look at the person’s life in order to find out where the words are coming from. It is the hurt people who hurt people. When someone is hurting you, it’s because they have been hurt and are still hurting. Unkind people are the ones that need our love and care the most, since they are probably in short supply of love and care at that moment. In fact, their hard, hurtful words are more of a distress symbol saying, “I need massive doses of love! I do not feel loved! I do not feel secure!” When someone is cranky or mean, it is often because they are in pain and they need us to give love instead of anger. So we must make the choice to either respond to them in anger, just like they are giving to us, or to respond in

love, much like they really need. To respond just like them is **to become just like them**, but to respond in love is to **transcend above them** and give the possibility of making a positive change in their life.

We must decide to never have any enemies in our life. They may hate me, but I will not hate them because to respond in anger is to stay on their same level. Rather, rise up and be like Jesus and love even those who respond hurtfully to you. So look beyond their words to see their pain and we strive to make a difference in their life to ease the pain and bring peace and love to them. Aggression only creates more aggression and anger only creates more anger, and soon there is anger all around you and it all comes because you didn't cool your anger and look beyond the words to find the situation behind the words.

3) The third way to disarm the button-pusher is a big one. **Think before you react!** Anger control is largely a matter of **mouth control**. When the crazy-maker starts pushing your buttons, it may be visible or it may be hidden, or it may be in a manipulative way, but before you respond, THINK! Don't respond impulsively or that may lead you to responding in anger. So put your mind in gear before you put your mouth in motion. **Proverbs 13:16** tells us "*Sensible people always think before they act.*" And **Proverbs 29:11** tells us "*A fool gives full vent to his anger. But a wise person quietly holds it back.*" This literally means to cool your anger, grab hold of your tongue and before you respond with something you might regret, think it out. Chill out! Cool your anger! Wait before you respond!

Here are three questions you can ask yourself as you are trying to remain calm - three things to think about. #1. Why does this make me angry? Think before you react. Why am I angry?

#2. What do I really want? This person is pushing my buttons right now and I'm tempted to respond in anger, but what is it that I really want? Why am I angry?

#3. How can I get what I really want? What's the best way to respond to get the best out of this relationship? Take a moment and think of these three questions so it gives you time to cool down before you respond. You see, if you reflect and take a moment to respond, you'll be able to identify the root cause of the button-pushing. It's going to be one of three things: hurt, frustration or fear.

1) **Hurt** – we get angry when we are hurting. When we are wounded either emotionally or physically

we get angry. Hit your thumb with a hammer once, and see what happens – anger!

2) **Frustration** – we get angry when we are frustrated. When we're irritated and not getting the results we want in the time frame we expected, we get frustrated and that leads to anger. When we can't control the situation we're in, we get frustrated and that creates anger. The higher control person you are the more prone you are to anger because you want to be in control of everything. If you're a low-control person you don't really deal with anger that much because you're easy going. Frustration leads to anger.

3) **Fear** – When we're afraid, when we feel threatened, when we feel attacked, we fight back. Any animal backed into a corner will fight back, no matter how tame they are. Fear creates anger.

Taking time to reflect on the situation helps give us time to ask, “Am I hurt? Am I frustrated? Am I afraid?” Or even, “Is that person hurt, frustrated or afraid?” The longer we take to respond to the crazy maker pushing our buttons, the greater opportunity we have to assess the situation and determine the best response.

Thomas Jefferson was not a theologian but what he said about anger was true. He said, “When you're angry, count to ten. If you're really angry, count to a hundred.” So don't text right back to the person who has just blasted you. Don't respond to that email when the person is just baiting you in to a fight. Don't respond quickly but rather sleep on it, let it cool, calm down and chill out. Count to ten – or one hundred. Then work to understand the situation so that your response can be the best possible one to bring peace and love to the other.

Did you know that anger is contagious? Just watch how fast anger travels among people who are hurt or afraid or frustrated. If you're not careful, it will catch you up, too, and you'll become angry just like they are.

Proverbs 15:1 tells us, “A *gentle answer quiets anger, but a harsh one stirs it up.*” So just by staying calm and cool and collected and responding in a calm or relaxed voice you can bring peace to the whole situation. Not only does it quiet your anger, it also quiets the anger of those around you.

I had a professor in seminary who said we should always respond to another in the same level of voice that they are talking to us. But I think he was wrong. Speaking in the same tone as those around us who are angry will only escalate the anger and create more. But if we speak quietly, those who are angry will calm down a bit and find that they don't need to raise their voice.

Proverbs 17:27 also tells us *“A wise person uses few words; A person with understanding is even-*

tempered.” A truly wise person uses few words. We can’t put our foot into our mouth if it’s closed. The best way to bring peace to a situation is to say only what is necessary, only what is kind and true.

4) The fourth way to disarm the button-pushers is to **Ask God for help.** Psalm 141:3 is a great prayer from King David, *“Lord, help me control my tongue; help me to be careful about what I say!”*

Now, if you were to take a tube of toothpaste and squeeze it, what’s going to come out? Yeah, toothpaste. Whatever is in the tube is going to come out when pressure is applied to the tube. So when you are pressured, when your life is squeezed, when your heart is squashed, **what comes out of us is what is in us.**

The problems I’m facing in my life with my anger, and the struggle I’m having with the ones that I love the most, **I can’t blame them.** I can’t blame my anger in the circumstances because the problem is **inside ME.** The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. It’s what’s coming out of me. So when I’m under tension all of a sudden I want to respond with what is inside of me. Pressure always reveals what is inside of us. We don’t like to admit it, but it’s true. We see these things coming out of us and we ask, “Where did that come from?” Well, it came from within us. It comes from our hearts. So the key is to change our heart. The best thing to do is to change the heart and then what comes out will be different. We’ve got to ask God for help.

When a well has bad water, fixing the pump will not bring better water. It’s what’s in the well that is going to be pumped out. In order to get better water, we have to change the well we’re drawing from. If we don’t change the well, we’ll always have bad water. So how can we fix it? We change the source.

So it is true for our lives. If we don’t like what we’re seeing coming out of us, we have to start drawing from a different source. We have to change what is within us in order to change what is coming out of us. And that only happens as we let God’s Holy Spirit fill us with the goodness of God. Galatians 5:22 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” It’s the fruit of the Spirit that we receive as we let Jesus be Lord of our lives. Being filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit will change what is within us, so when the pressures of life squeeze us, it will look completely different than if we are filled with ourselves. If we are full of the Holy Spirit, we’ll be able to respond to the crazy

makers in completely new ways. Asking God for help changes what is within us so that we can change what surrounds us by what comes out of us.

5) And this leads us to our last way to disarm the button-pushers; **I must base my identity in Jesus.**

The most important key to dealing with anger is to first deal with yourself in your own life. We must change what we build our identity on. We must base our identity in Jesus remembering that He love us unconditionally, that we are His people, that we are valuable, that we are worthwhile and that He has a purpose and plan for our life.

If we try to build our identity on anything else, we'll struggle with insecurity our whole life. If we try to build our identity on our jobs, it can go away. If we try to build our identity on good looking we are, we're going to lose our good looks. If we try to build our identity on the person we married, they're going to die. If we build our identity on being popular, we'll not always be popular. If we build our identity on anything that can be taken away from us, we will be insecure; and insecurity is at the root of anger. Until we start feeling secure about ourselves, people are going to be able to push your buttons. When you know who you are and Whose you are, people can't push your buttons. They can't get to you. Anger and insecurity go together – the more insecure I feel, the more angry I feel.

So I have to base my identity in Jesus, otherwise you're going to be able to push my buttons because I'm going to care too much about what you think of me; I'm going to care too much about your approval or disapproval.

Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of human opinion disables you, but trusting in God protects you from

that." Worry about what others think about us creates an emotional disability within us. Some wise words were once given to me by a friend. He said, "Don't worry what others are thinking about you, because they probably aren't." So when we have our identity with Jesus, we don't have to worry about what others think.

Remember this, please. Our mouth reveals what's inside our heart. A harsh tongue reveals an angry heart – it's showing what's inside. A negative tongue reveals a fearful heart. A boasting tongue reveals an insecure heart. It's always the heart. An overactive tongue reveals an unsettled heart. A judgmental tongue

reveals a guilty heart. The most judgmental people are those who feel guilty the most. A critical tongue reveals a bitter heart. It always shows what's inside. A filthy tongue reveals an impure heart. ON THE OTHER HAND, an encouraging tongue reveals a happy heart and a gentle tongue reveals a loving heart. A controlled tongue reveals a peaceful heart.

But you know what you need to get rid of your anger? You need a heart transplant, and God specializes in transplanting new hearts into those who call on Him. It's called SALVATION. God gives you a brand new heart and He gives you a brand new identity, and all of a sudden what we focus on building our identity for our life changes from the things of this world to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let me close today with a couple of verses and a summary of what we've been talking about.

Ephesians 1:4 says, "*Long ago, even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us...Before He made the universe He chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.*" That's God's desire for us, and it comes as we identify our lives in Him.

Matthew 5:48 tells us this, "*Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.*" When we live with our identity in Jesus Christ, everything else becomes secondary and we are able to be generous and gracious with the people around us, especially the button-pushers. It is God who determines who we are, not the world.

Three things that cause anger Jesus can heal – hurt, frustration and fear. Jesus can heal your hurting heart with His love. Jesus can replace your frustrated heart with His peace. Jesus can replace your insecure heart with His power. If you pick up a crying baby and you hold that baby close and it feels warm and it feels secure, it stops crying. It stops being angry. When you feel secure and accepted in Jesus Christ, your anger is going to dissipate, because we are going to be focused on Him.

So today we get to remember that great love of Jesus for us, how He came to the earth to release us from our captivity to sin in this world. Through communion we are once more united with Him as we claim Him again as our Savior and Lord....

Communion service