

HACC Small Groups 2018 Fall Cycle
Series: Soul Detox | Part #5: Anger

INTRODUCTION

If we're being honest, anger is a soul toxin that every one of us has encountered and fought at some point in our lives. For some of us it is an ongoing battle. We have to resist anger everyday. For those of us who are particularly challenged by anger, it's safe to say that we're not proud of it.

Anger is not a constant character trait. That is to say that few of us exist within a constant state of anger. For many of us, anger is more like an occasional mood. Sometimes we're pleasant, and other times we are angry. Kind of like the Marvel Comics character the Hulk.

Perhaps some of us can relate to the Hulk. His alter ego Bruce Banner was mild mannered and tame. But when he got angry, wow. He changed. He changed into the Hulk. He was strong. He was powerful. Nothing and no one could stand in his way. It seemed as if anger was a good thing for the Hulk. Literally a source of strength. Some of us are a bit like the Hulk. Most of the time we're Bruce Banner – calm and contained. Some of us maintain an incredibly professional demeanor in our workplaces. But then anger gets into us and our mood might make us seem like a different person. Sometimes we mistakenly resort to anger because we feel like people take us more seriously when we're angry. Yet unfortunately our family and friends bear the brunt of that mistake.

Even if our anger does not become rage, this behaviour is still not healthy, and we know it. In fact, again for those of us who know we are prone to anger, that is probably the trait about ourselves of which we are the most ashamed. Like Bruce Banner, we might even say to people, "You wouldn't like me when I'm angry." It's true. They wouldn't like us. We don't even like ourselves when we're that way.

But it isn't meant to be this way. There is hope and help for us. If anger is a toxin that you struggle with, be encouraged and know that you don't need to let the toxin of anger take hold of you. You don't need to let your anger challenges damage your relationships and your own health. There is an antidote and it's found in Scripture.

PASSAGE

Ephesians 4 - Instructions for Christian living

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ 'In your anger do not sin': do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

DISCUSSION

1. Anger is the Old Way

- a. When we make a decision to live for Christ, we put behind us the old way of doing things. One of the old ways we put behind us is the predisposition to anger. Can you share how your anger level has changed since you received Christ?
- b. Sometimes after coming to faith in Jesus Christ, we still continue to struggle with anger. What are some reasons why this may be the case? What can we do about it?

2. Anger *Can* be Self-Destructive

- a. Is there ever a time when it is appropriate to get angry?
- b. Whom in our lives is affected by our negative anger? What are some of the unfortunate side-effects of anger?
- c. Why is it so harmful when believers are angry with one another?
- d. How is our anger self-destructive? Answer this question in the context of knowing that believers belong to the same body.
- e. Why is it so important that you "do not let the sun go down while you are still angry?"

3. Forgiveness is the Antidote to the Toxin of Anger

- a. Can you think of any health benefits of forgiveness?
- b. What do we do when someone has wronged us and they are unapologetic? Can we still forgive this person? If so, then how?
- c. How does the example of Christ's forgiveness motivate us to forgive?

PRAYER

Spend some time as a group praying for each other to know when to ask for forgiveness, to have the courage to forgive when wronged, and through the power of the Holy Spirit eradicate the toxin of anger.