

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for "the big question."*

Read Matthew 5:21-26 aloud.

1. What strikes you about this text? Why do you find this word, phrase, or image significant?

What did Kevin say this morning that you found to be a helpful or challenging point about this topic of anger?

2. Talk about a time in your life where you experienced genuine anger. What happened?

How did you react internally and externally?

What would you do if you had the situation to do over again?

Why is it hard, in the moment, to keep anger from getting worse and worse?

Do you have any helpful advice for how to resist letting anger get out of control?

3. Jesus begins explaining a different kind of righteousness by talking about murder (see Bible Notes). What does he say is the prevailing understanding about this topic (21)?

What does Jesus say is the new teaching for his disciples (22)?

Why is Jesus' teaching harder than the prevailing one?

Why is Jesus' teaching better than the prevailing one?

How would you paraphrase for a new Christian what Jesus says in these two verses about anger (21-22)?

4. Jesus follows by giving two practical ways to live out this new teaching. What is the first example (23-24)?

What was typically happening for the Jewish people when they made sacrifices at altars? *Hint: They were in worship to God.*

What then do you think Jesus is saying about the relation between our relationship with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ?

5. What is the second example Jesus gives concerning his new teaching (25-26)?

What is one key principle about anger you take from this example?

Name some of the dangers of letting a conflict drag out? *Hint: Consider both Jesus' words and your own life experience.*

Name some of the blessings of bringing about reconciliation quickly? *Hint: Consider both Jesus' words and your own life experience.*

6. Where is one place now in the world where you see destructive effects of anger?

What do you think it would look like for Christians to be salt and light in that area of the world?

Is there anything Jesus says here in this section of the Sermon on the Mount that could instruct someone towards a life of greater reconciliation (a.k.a. a life of being salt and light)?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Where is one area of your life where you struggle with anger? What can you do to begin transforming that arena of your life?

Resources

Bible notes

This section of text (5:21-26) needs to be seen within its immediate context to get the full effect of Jesus' words. He has just stated that he wants his disciples to be about righteousness that goes beyond the Pharisee's superficial focus and moves into one's heart (Matt 5:17-20). Jesus then moves into six "illustrations" of how this deeper heart righteousness will look in the world (5:21-48). Notice how he repeats, "you have heard that it was said...but truly I say to you." Anger is his first example. It is important to keep in mind that Jesus is ultimately about the heart's transformation.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

"Anger Strategies" Activity

Opening Discussion: Who has ever been angry? Why did you get angry? What makes you angry? Is it okay for Christians to be angry? Why or why not?

Read: Matthew 5:21-26. As a way to get more kids involved have one kid read each verse.

Discussion: What is Jesus telling us about disciples and anger? Does he say anything that helps us to learn how we might better deal with our anger?

Break-Out: As a way for us to make this lesson practical we are going to brainstorm ways to help us be better at resisting anger and transforming our hearts into more loving attitudes. So break into groups of 3-4 and come up with as many pieces of advice you can think of as to how you can help transform anger. The group with the most ideas wins a prize (you can bring candy for the winner).

Gather back together and make a huge list on a dry erase board or on a large easel of paper. After they are all written have the group pick their five favorite pieces of advice. Close with prayer.

Here are five to help you get started:

1. Count to ten before responding.
2. Talk to a friend to help you calm down.
3. Have a Bible verse memorized to repeat as you cool off.
4. Remember to see other people as children of God.
5. Pray.



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LIFE Group Guide

Matthew 5:21-26 – The Heart of Murder

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The theme: **In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus pushes his disciples from Pharisaical righteousness dealing strictly with surface actions to deeper righteousness that transforms the heart and eventually their lives. The first area of life Jesus deals with involves murder. However, the deeper issue, as Jesus points out, is really anger. When left unresolved anger can destroy our relationship with God and with one another. Therefore, Jesus calls his disciples to act quickly to bring about reconciliation.**

This week Kevin preached on Jesus' words about anger. Anger is not inherently wrong, but so often it intensifies and leads to sinful destruction of our neighbors. The response of disciples to such living is to seek reconciliation quickly and at all costs. In a world where anger often reigns supreme such a life declares a different kind of reign—God's reign.

Leadership tip: Jesus' words about anger provide LG leaders with a reminder of their role as peacemakers in the small group setting. When members disagree there is the potential for huge chasms to be created. As a leader (and a disciple of Jesus) part of your responsibility is to be proactive in creating an environment of peace for you group.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ What is one of your favorite "snowy memories" of all time?
- ❖ If you had to pick three items to take with you on a deserted island what would they be? Why?
- ❖ Where would you pick to go on vacation if you had one free week all to yourself? (Try an answer other than "a deserted island").