**First Things First**

**ABC’s of The Christian Life**

Angry? Who, me? Or, Dealing with anger honestly and effectively

**James 1:19, 20**

**The Problem:** Anger can destroy us and our relationship to God and others.

“The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

In spite of our pleas of “righteous indignation,” most human anger is dangerous and self-destructive. Scripture repeatedly links anger with other problems and sins such as gossip, slander, and violence (Proverbs 15:1, 18; 29:22; 30:33; Ephesians 4:25-32). Of course it should anger us when injustice is done or God’s glory is defamed, and God does not call us to be doormats for fools. But the Bible teaches us not to respond (to offenses) in kind, but with grace and self-control.

**The Case Studies:** When God confronts the angry, He asks them questions.

The following is not a complete list of the angry people in the Bible. But here are four clear cases in which, in entirely different circumstances, God lovingly and personally confronts anger. We do well to ask these questions of ourselves.

* **Cain and the anger of jealousy:** “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?” Genesis 4:1-8

The anger of jealousy (or covetousness) arises when someone else has something we want: money, position, power, comfort, a relationship, talents, etc. Rather than focus upon how we can correct ourselves to achieve what is desirable, or come to terms with real life, we lash out at the one who has what we want, even family or friends, all the time blaming God.

* **Jonah and the anger of self-righteousness:** “Do you do well to be angry? Should I not have compassion?” Jonah 4:1-11

This anger towards others (and God) often comes from a sense of our own righteousness. Rather than admitting our need of grace and extending grace to others, we become angry because we somehow think that we know better how to run the world than does God. Isaiah 55:8, 9

* **Elijah and the anger of self-pity:** “What are you doing here?” 1 Ki. 19:1-18

Elijah persists in his “attitude” even after God’s grace in the “still small voice.” He mouths the same words about his being “the only faithful one left,” even though things are otherwise (v. 18). God’s question attempts to help Elijah see that his place was courage on the front lines, not cowardice in a cave. Self-pity anger flourishes in the garden of unmet (wrong) expectations.

* **Job and the anger of grief:** “Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?” Job 40:1-14

The biggest surprise in the book of Job is that it is Job, God’s poster-boy for righteousness, who repents at the end (Job 42:1-6). Of what did Job repent, if not for the anger he had towards God about a perceived injustice stemming from his great loss? (See especially God’s rebuke in 38:1-3; 40:1, 2, 6-14). And if Job was in danger of that, how much more are we? Grief usually contains an element of anger, but we work through that towards resolution.

*These profiles help us see that we must deal with our anger by looking at its absurdity, sinfulness, and wrong-spirited assumptions. When we question our anger honestly, it is revealed for what it is: a product of our pride which damages relationships and severs the golden cord of worship.*

***Because human anger does not work God’s righteousness, we do well to question both its reasons and its proportion, striving in the Spirit to live in peace with reasonable people, and embracing God’s sovereignty over life***.