

ANGER

MIND GAMES

WEEK 1 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY ERIC PARKS

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

Have you ever said something really dumb or made an extremely bad decision when you were angry only to later regret it? Explain.

SHARE

Welcome to our new series entitled, "Mind Games."

Every day we experience an entire spectrum of God-given emotions. Think about your day so far. How many different emotions have you experienced? In a given day it is possible to feel happiness, frustration, sadness, joy, optimism, regret, anger, insecurity, fear, and anxiety. It's fascinating, the roller coaster of emotions we can experience in just one day. There are many factors at play with our emotions. For instance, if we are tired or worn out, we might be more susceptible to be easily frustrated or angered. If we are feeling joyful and well-rested, we might be more likely to be gracious and patient with others. Not always; but more likely.

Now if that wasn't complicated enough, let's add the powerful influence of our thought life. We all have a wide-range of thoughts that go through our brains and half the time we don't even understand where they are coming from. Some of us think the best in situations, while others tend to believe that the sky is falling and think the worst. Thoughts are powerful and what you believe about God, yourself, and other people is more important than you might think.

We are told throughout scripture that we are loved, valuable, and we are worth being pursued by a loving God. We can either think about the truth of what God says about us or we can believe lies. In 2 Corinthians Paul tells us to literally, "...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We shouldn't let our thoughts push us around. We can take control and make sure that those thoughts line up with the Word of God. If the thoughts you're having aren't true, send them packing and cling to what God says is true! Make them obedient to Christ.

This week Eric talked about a powerful emotion that can be harnessed for great good or can be mishandled and lead to all sorts of problems. When we think of anger, we tend to think of it as a negative, when in fact it is a God-given emotion that serves as a warning light. Bill Hybels

writes, “Anger is neither good nor bad.” In the book of Ephesians, Paul writes, “In your anger, do not sin.” Anger is simply an indicator that something is not right and that something under the hood needs attention. When we feel anger, we need to ask God why we are feeling angry and how we are to respond.

What are some examples of how mishandling anger can be extremely destructive?

Can you think of any examples of how a godly response to anger can be productive and helpful?

GROW

If we are honest, all of us would agree that we mishandle anger. The Bible has much to say about how to respond in a godly way when we are angry. One of the biggest fallacies about dealing with anger is that if we just explode, we will get rid of all that anger.

John Ortberg, Pastor of Menlo Park Church writes

It turns out there is a problem with ventilating anger. The old theory was get angry, ventilate, and get it out of your system. The problem is that ventilation...Exploding...is tolerable and self-reinforcing. In other words, people hit, they feel powerful, and they want to hit more.

Let’s take a look at Proverbs 29:11 and Proverbs 19:19

There are other ways to mishandle anger; another example is to believe that by bottling our emotions, the anger will just go away. Bottlers are typically afraid of anger and tend to avoid conflict at all costs, but this causes bitterness and resentment to take hold in the heart. Bitterness not only causes destruction to the bottler, but the Bible tells us that it eventually hurts other people.

Let’s read Hebrews 12:14-16

There are lots of other ways people mishandle anger like being sarcastic or outwardly tearing other people down. Whether exploding, bottling, using sarcasm, or tearing down others; none of these gets rid of anger. Worse; these reactions reinforce the behavior.

Of the verses we just read, which one most impacts you today?

How are you most prone to mishandle anger

- **Explode**
- **Bottle**
- **Sarcasm**
- **Tearing down others**
- **Other**

MOVE

Most of us who mishandle our anger have learned the behavior by those closest to us. Maybe it was how you saw your dad or mom deal with anger? Maybe you fly off the handle because you are around another person who explodes and you have learned their ways. Regardless of how we learned it, the good news is that we can ‘unlearn’ it.

Proverbs 14:29 tells us, “Those who control their anger have great understanding; those with a hasty temper will make mistakes.”

Read James 1:19-21

Those who are able to control their anger in a godly way are quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to be angry. By starting at the source, we can ask God to give us patience and understanding. As Eric mentioned in the message, all of us need to take a moment before we respond in anger and ask the Spirit to lead us and help us to respond rightly to people. We all feel the emotion of anger; that is a certainty, but we don't have to explode, bottle or sarcastically tear others down. We can keep in step with the Spirit; God will always provide us guidance to respond his way.

Let's finish by reading Galatians 5:22-26

What do you need to start doing to handle your anger in a godly way?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the situations that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO.**Proverbs 15:18**

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.