

NTF SUNDAY SCHOOL MANUAL

THEME:

Emotions and our Faith Walk with God:

MISCONCEPTIONS OF ANGER AND PROVOCATION

Sub-Theme:

Provoked, But Not Owned

Primary Texts:

Ephesians 4:24–32; Colossians 3:8–10

Supporting Scriptures:

Galatians 5:19–23; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 16:32;
Proverbs 19:11; Proverbs 22:24–25; Proverbs 29:11;
Ecclesiastes 7:9; Matthew 5:21–24; Luke 17:1; Romans
12:19–21; James 1:19–20.

Memory Verse:

Proverbs 19:11

“The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it
is his glory to pass over a transgression.”

Coordinator:

Bro. Williams West

INTRODUCTION

As we continue our study on Emotions and Our Faith Walk with God, we come to an important pathway of the Christian life: ANGER AND PROVOCATION.

Every human being will encounter situations that provoke a response.

We will be disappointed.

We will be misunderstood.

We will be offended.

We will be treated unfairly.

We will encounter words, attitudes, actions and circumstances that challenge our emotions.

The question is therefore not:

“Will I ever be provoked?”

The answer is yes.

The more important question is:

“What will I do with my provocation?”

Our faith does not promise us a life without provocation. Rather, our faith teaches us how to respond when provocation comes.

There is a difference between what happens to us and what we allow to happen through us.

A person may provoke me, but that person does not have the right to determine my response.

This is where the distinction between provocation and anger becomes important

WHO AM I?

Key Text:

Ephesians 4:24

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Before we discuss anger, we must first establish identity.

The way we respond to situations is greatly influenced by who we believe we are.

Paul tells the believer to:

1. Put off the old man.
2. Be renewed in the spirit of the mind.
3. Put on the new man.

This means that Christianity is not merely about changing our external behavior.

It is about living from a new identity in Christ.

THE QUESTION:

Do I believe in the new man that I have put on?

If I believe that I am a new creation, then I must learn to respond from the nature of the new man.

I cannot continually identify myself with the old nature while claiming the reality of the new man.

Ephesians 4:22–24 teaches:

Put off the old man.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Put on the new man.

Therefore, when provocation comes, the question is not merely:

“What did this person do to me?”

The deeper question is:

“Who am I going to be in this situation?”

THE MISCONCEPTION OF ANGER AND PROVOCATION

What is provocation?

Provocation is an action, word, circumstance or event that stimulates a response.

People can provoke us.

Circumstances can provoke us.

Disappointment can provoke us.

Unfair treatment can provoke us.

Being misunderstood can provoke us.

The Bible recognizes that offences and occasions for stumbling will come.

Luke 17:1

“It is impossible but that offences will come.”

Therefore:

Provocation is inevitable.

But provocation does not have to become sinful behavior.

PROVOCATION IS NOT PERMISSION TO SIN

When we are provoked, something happens inside us.

We may feel:

- * hurt,
- * disappointed,
- * sad,
- * frustrated,
- * challenged,
- * offended,
- * irritated.

The existence of an emotional response does not automatically mean that we have sinned.

The spiritual question is:

What do I do with that response?

Faith teaches us to bring our response under the government of the Holy Spirit.

ANGER AND PROVOCATION: A GREEK STUDY

Ephesians 4:26

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

The Greek text uses ὀργίζεσθε (orgizesthe), from ὀργίζω (orgizō), in the first part of the verse.

The verse then uses παροργισμός (parorgismos) in the phrase concerning what should not remain until the sun goes down.

The wording has generated discussion among interpreters. Some translations render the first clause as “Be angry and do not sin,” while others express the sense as “In your anger do not sin.” The important point for this lesson is that Paul immediately places a limitation on anger: do not sin, do not allow it to remain unresolved, and do not give the devil an opportunity. (STEP Bible)

Therefore, our teaching emphasis is:

Provocation may come.

The emotional response may arise.

But the believer must not allow that response to become sinful anger, bitterness, wrath, malice or destructive behavior.

Ephesians 4:31 specifically instructs believers to put away:

- * bitterness,
 - * wrath,
 - * anger,
 - * clamour,
- evil speaking,
malice.

And Ephesians 4:32 gives the Spirit-led alternative:

“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another...”

The movement is therefore:

Old response → Put it off.

New response → Put on Christlike character.

ANGER AS A WORK OF THE FLESH

Colossians 3:8–10

Paul says:

“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice…”

He then says:

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

This is powerful.

Paul connects the removal of anger and wrath with the believer’s putting off of the old man and living according to the new man.

Therefore:

Anger must not become an expression of the old nature in the life of the believer.

Galatians 5:19–23 contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit.

The flesh produces behavior that is inconsistent with the character of Christ.

The Spirit produces:

- * love,
- * joy,
- * peace,
- * longsuffering,
- * gentleness,
- * goodness,
- * faith,
- * meekness,
- * temperance/self-control.

SADNESS, DISAPPOINTMENT AND ANGER

There is a difference between being:

Sad

Sadness recognizes pain or loss.

Disappointed

Disappointment recognizes that something did not happen as expected.

Provoked

Provocation occurs when something or someone stimulates an emotional response.

Sinful Anger

Anger becomes spiritually destructive when we allow the emotion to govern our words, attitudes, actions, relationships and responses in a way contrary to God's character and commands.

Therefore, the question is not:

“Did I feel something?”

The question is:

“What did I do with what I felt?”

THE FLESH PATHWAY AND THE SPIRIT PATHWAY

THE FLESH PATHWAY

Provocation → Uncontrolled emotion → Anger/Wrath
→ Destructive words/actions → Sin → Opportunity for
the enemy

Ephesians 4:26– 27 connects unresolved anger with
giving the devil an opportunity.

The Greek word τόπος (topos) in verse 27 means a
place, opportunity or room.

Paul' s warning is therefore serious:
Do not give the devil an opportunity.

THE SPIRIT PATHWAY

Provocation → Pause → Faith → Self-control → Grace
→ Spirit-led response → Peace

The Holy Spirit does not deny what happened.

He teaches us how to respond to what happened.

James 1:19–20

“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

The issue is not simply whether something wrong happened.

The issue is whether my response will produce the righteousness of God.

ANGER GIVES A FOOTHOLD

Ephesians 4:27

“Neither give place to the devil.”

Anger can become an entry point for destructive behavior.

Once anger controls the response:

- * words can become weapons,
- * body language can communicate hostility,
- * relationships can be damaged,
- * accusations can multiply,
- * bitterness can develop,
- * reconciliation can become difficult.

Sometimes it is not what we say.

Sometimes our body language has already spoken.

The tone of our voice can speak.

The expression on our face can speak.

Our silence can speak.

Our gestures can speak.

Therefore, walking in the Spirit includes allowing the

Holy Spirit to govern not only our words, but also our attitudes and conduct.

ANGER AND THE POWER OF WORDS

Ephesians 4:29

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying...”

Words spoken in anger can cause wounds that are difficult to reverse.

A word cannot always be taken back simply because we later apologize.

This is why the believer must learn to pause before speaking.

Proverbs 15:1

“A soft answer turneth away wrath.”

Proverbs 29:11

“ A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”

Wisdom knows that not everything we feel must immediately become something we say.

BODY LANGUAGE CAN ALSO REVEAL THE HEART

Anger is not always expressed verbally.

A person can say:

“I am not angry.”

while communicating anger through:

- * facial expressions,
- * gestures,
- * posture,
- * silence,
- * tone,
- * withdrawal,
- * contempt.

The Christian life therefore requires more than learning how to control vocabulary.

God wants transformation of the heart.

Proverbs 4:23

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

“LEGITIMATE ANGER”

Some people say:

“I have a right to be angry.”

Perhaps something genuinely wrong has happened.

Perhaps an injustice occurred.

Perhaps someone acted wrongly.

But the existence of wrongdoing does not give us

permission to respond in the flesh.

Romans 12:19

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves…”

The believer does not need to become his own judge, prosecutor and executioner.

We can address wrongdoing without becoming controlled by anger.

We can correct without hatred.

We can confront without malice.

We can establish boundaries without bitterness.

We can speak truth without destroying another person.

ANGER AND OUR PRAYERS

One area where anger can hide is in our prayer life.

Sometimes our prayers contain words that reveal resentment, vengeance and bitterness.

We may bring our grievances before God, but then allow our emotions to determine what we declare over another person.

The believer must remember:

Prayer is not a place to baptize the works of the flesh.

We bring our pain to God.

We bring our disappointment to God.

We bring our injustice to God.

But we also submit our response to God.

Romans 12:21

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

“WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE” MATTERS

Identity affects behavior.

If I believe I am the old man, I will continually justify old responses.

If I understand that I have put on the new man, I will expect the character of Christ to be expressed through me.

Ephesians 4:24

The new man is created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.

Therefore:

I don't respond according to who the other person says I am.

I respond according to who God says I am.

The person who offended me does not redefine my identity.

The person who provoked me does not become the lord of my emotions.

WE ARE NOT CALLED TO RULE OVER MEN

God has not called us to control other people.

We cannot control:

- * another person' s attitude,
- * another person' s words,
- * another person' s choices,
- * another person' s response.

But we are responsible for our own response before God.

Therefore, we must treat people with grace.

Ephesians 4:32

“ And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ' s sake hath forgiven you.”

Grace does not mean approving wrongdoing.

Grace means refusing to allow another person' s wrongdoing to turn us into people who operate outside the character of Christ.

“THE LORD SAID...”

Jesus took the issue of anger seriously.

In Matthew 5, Christ connected anger, contempt and destructive speech with the seriousness of murder.

The point is that God is concerned not only with the external act but also with the condition of the heart from which destructive behavior proceeds.

Therefore:

Murder begins deeper than the physical act.

Hatred, contempt and destructive anger can corrupt relationships long before physical violence occurs.

The believer must therefore deal with anger at the heart level.

JESUS AND PROVOCATION

Jesus was opposed.

Jesus was insulted.

Jesus was misunderstood.

Jesus was falsely accused.

Jesus was betrayed.

Jesus was rejected.

Yet He did not allow the behavior of others to determine His obedience to the Father. 1 Peter 2:23

“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again…”

This gives us a powerful model.

Jesus did not surrender His identity to His persecutors.

He remained under the Father’s will.

THE QUESTION IS NOT ONLY THE ACTION — IT IS THE REACTION

Someone may have done something wrong.

That action belongs to them.

But my reaction belongs to me.

Therefore, ask:

What happened?

What did I feel?

What did I believe about what happened?

What did I say?

How did I behave?

Did I respond from the flesh or from the Spirit?

Did my response represent Christ?

This is where spiritual maturity becomes visible.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

When provocation comes:

1. RECOGNIZE IT

Say within yourself:

“I have been provoked. I do not have to become angry and sin.”

2. PAUSE

Do not allow the first emotional impulse to become the final response.

3. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

“I am the new man in Christ.”

4. SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ask:

“Holy Spirit, how should I respond?”

5. CONTROL YOUR WORDS

Do not speak simply because you have something to say.

6. REFUSE REVENGE

Leave vengeance in God's hands.

7. RESPOND WITH GRACE

Grace does not make you weak.

Grace demonstrates that your response is governed by Christ rather than by the offender.

8. RECONCILE WHERE POSSIBLE

Do not allow temporary provocation to become permanent separation.

THE TWO PATHWAYS

THE FLESH THE SPIRIT

ProvocationProvocation

Immediate reaction Spiritual pause

AngerSelf-control

Harsh words Grace-filled words

Revenge Trust in God

Bitterness Forgiveness

Malice Love

Division Reconciliation

Gives the enemy opportunity Walks in God' s
righteousness

PERSONAL EXAMINATION

Ask yourself:

1. What usually provokes me?
2. How do I normally respond?
3. Do I justify my anger because I believe I have a right to it?
4. What happens to my words when I am angry?
5. What does my body language communicate?
6. Do I carry anger from one day into another?
7. Have I allowed someone' s behavior to control my emotions?
8. Am I responding from the old man or the new man?

9. Am I walking in the fruit of the Spirit?
10. What would Jesus-like response look like in my present situation?

KEY TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

Provocation is inevitable.

2. Provocation does not require a fleshly response.
3. The believer is responsible for his response.
4. The new man must govern the response of the believer.
5. Anger must not be allowed to become bitterness, wrath, malice or destructive speech.
6. We must not allow another person's behavior to become the master of our emotions.
7. The Holy Spirit produces self-control.
8. We can confront wrong without becoming wrong in our response.
9. We leave vengeance in God's hands.
10. The goal is not merely to manage anger; the goal is to walk in the Spirit and manifest the character of Christ.

CONCLUSION

We will all be provoked in this life.

The issue is not whether provocation will come

The issue is what we do when it comes.

A person may offend you, but they do not have to become the director of your emotions.

A person may speak against you, but they do not determine your character.

A person may treat you wrongly, but their wrong treatment does not give you permission to leave the pathway of the Spirit.

The believer has put off the old man and put on the new man.

Therefore, when provocation comes, we remember:

I am not the old man.

I do not belong to the flesh.

I belong to Christ.

The Holy Spirit lives in me.

I can respond in the Spirit.

The goal is not merely to become better at managing

anger.

The goal is to become so conscious of our new identity in Christ that, when provocation comes, the life of Christ becomes our response.