

m MASTERCLASS | JAMES

DAILY DEVOTION

DAY 4

READ

JAMES 1:19-25

FOCUS

²⁰BECAUSE HUMAN ANGER DOES NOT PRODUCE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT GOD DESIRES.

REFLECTION from PASTOR AUTUMN IGO

I'm a pretty adventurous person. My husband won't let me bungee jump, but other than that I think I've done just about every other thrilling thing that I've set my mind to. I have to say though, the fear I felt in the past few weeks dwarfs anything I've felt before. At 5 pm on August 10th, my oldest son adjusted his mirrors and steered our family car out of its parking space. Nothing says terror like a teenage driver with a learner's permit.

As we've been cautiously guiding him around town, one of the lessons we've been drilling into his head is that the signs on the side of the road post a LIMIT to your speed, not an average or a minimum. We've told him (more than a few times) if it feels dangerous...go slow....slower....SLOWER!!

That's exactly what James is saying about anger...it's dangerous. So go really, really slow with it.

There are lots of Bible verses on anger. I have friends who like to point out that being angry is not a sin, and I agree. Jesus got angry and didn't sin...but I'm not Him. I can tell you that 99.9% of the time in my life anger is much more likely to lead me towards sin than it is towards righteousness, and it's righteousness that God wants to produce in me.

I have to admit, I think I've been more easily and often angered in 2020 than I have at any point in my life since childhood. It feels like somehow it's always right there with me, simmering only slightly below the surface. The thing about trials, such as the one we are currently experiencing, is they tend to expose areas of our spiritual lives that, while they may need work, can usually be covered over in calmer circumstances. So apparently, God wants to use this year to teach me about anger...which is kind of a bummer, because letting my anger loose sure feels good, and right, and just...in the moment. But it's also kind of like driving a car way to fast: it's really dangerous.

All this makes me think of Moses. In Deuteronomy 30, Moses has just finished laying the whole law out before the Israelite nation and he says to them, "See I set before you today... life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him" (Deut 30:15-20). So often I look at God's Word as a restriction to me...self-control never feels fun in the moment, but the truth of the matter is, it's not a choice between feeling stifled or feeling free, it's a choice between evil and righteousness, between life and death.

I've been asking myself, is my anger bringing life? Or is it making me reckless, out of control? This year has been about me (and I'm guessing a lot of you too) learning to pump the brakes on my anger. So that's my challenge to you today: it's a dangerous and angry season we're in...so go slow...slower...SLOWER.

QUESTIONS

- HAVE YOU SENSED AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF ANGER IN YOURSELF OR OTHERS LATELY? WHAT DO YOU THINK IS AT THE ROOT?
- WHAT CAN YOU DO TODAY TO PUMP THE BRAKES ON THE ANGER IN YOUR LIFE?