



Sermon Discussion Questions

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Dr. E. Dale Locke (LOX), Pastor Brandon Weaver (LW), Pastor Kurtis Alva (WPB), Pastor Efrain Silva (COH Español)

Sermon Series: Cave Time

Week 1: With Samson in the Cave of Anger

1. ICE BREAKER: This week's message is about anger. Sometimes we get angry about little things for no reason. Share some of the silliest things you have gotten angry about throughout your life.
2. Read our Scripture for this week, Judges 15:1-8:

Later on, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife. He said, "I'm going to my wife's room." But her father would not let him go in.

"I was so sure you hated her," he said, "that I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister more attractive? Take her instead."

Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines; I will really harm them." So he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive

groves.

When the Philistines asked, "Who did this?" they were told, "Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because his wife was given to his companion."

So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death. Samson said to them, "Since you've acted like this, I swear that I won't stop until I get my revenge on you." He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam.

Share your initial thoughts on this passage. What are the effects you see of Samson's anger?

3. The Book of Judges is a cautionary tale of what happens when we cast off restraint of any kind, and run headlong toward whatever it is we want – and whatever it is that everyone around us calls good! Pastor Dale said that we have some of this behavior happening right now in our culture.

Discuss this idea. Do you see this type of activity happening around you? Many people call doing whatever we want to 'freedom.' How do you define freedom? How do you think God defines freedom?

4. Anger is addictive and contagious, and most sociologists agree that we currently find ourselves in a culture of increased anger. Theologian and church researcher Ed Stetzer wrote, "The age of outrage [which is where we're living] has succeeded in trapping Christians by wrapping itself in one very appealing lie... that OUR anger is righteous anger. Righteous anger must be – wait for it – righteous. This means that God is looking for a certain character to our anger. Scripture consistently warns us about the proclivity of anger to turn into sin when we are reckless, unthinking, and selfish."

Discuss the difference between righteous anger and human anger. How are they different in practice? What are the effects of each? What would you describe as the 'character' of righteous anger?

5. Pastor Jorge writes in his book *Everybody Needs Some Cave Time*, "Out of control anger abandons us in a cave of misery, leaving behind a wake of broken relationships and damaged souls."

React to this quote. Where have you seen this true within your own life, or in the lives of others close to you?

6. Pastor Dale said that the first thing we need to do in handling our anger is Look Around. Psychologists often label anger as a secondary emotion, meaning it never occurs in isolation, and usually stems from another emotion. This is the idea of the Anger Iceberg. When we're angry, we need to figure out what other emotions that anger is masking.

What are some of the emotions that may cause anger? Give an example of when you have seen the "anger iceberg" in your own life. How do you uncover what your anger is actually about?

7. Author Timothy Keller takes the idea of the "anger iceberg" a step further and says this, "When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an 'idol,' something you are actually worshiping. When such a thing is threatened, your anger is absolute. Your anger is actually the way the idol keeps you in its service, in its chains. Therefore if you find that, despite all the efforts to forgive, your anger and bitterness cannot subside, you may need to look deeper and ask, 'What am I defending? What is so important that I cannot live without?' It may be that, until some inordinate desire is identified and confronted, you will not be able to master your anger."

As you "look around" Samson's life, what sorts of idols do you see that he had in place that led to his intense anger? Think about a moment in your life when you have been very angry. What idol may have been threatened in your life at that moment? Share if you are comfortable doing so.

8. The next way we are invited to handle our anger is to Slow It Down. Read James 1:19, "*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*" and Proverbs 15:18: "*A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.*"

How well do you feel that these concepts and way of living are currently embedded in your life? What are some practical ways that we can 'slow down' our anger?

9. Finally, we need to Replace the Crown, "*because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires*" (James 1:20). Further in his letter, James describes the righteousness that God desires in this way, "*But the*

wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:17-18).

What does it mean to you to 'replace the crown'? How do we remove the crown from ourselves, or from our idols, and place it where it belongs? Which of the fruits described in James 3:17-18 do you see as being present in your life? Which would you ask the Holy Spirit to give you more of?

10. PRACTICE: Pray the following together to close out your group time.

Father God, you are holy. You have created us in your image, and part of your creation means that we have the capability to anger. We confess now, however, that we have sometimes let this get out of control in our lives. There are times that our anger has led us to sin. Lord, forgive us for the times that we have been unrighteously angry.

Pause for everyone to confess silently times to the Lord when they have sinned in their anger.

Lord, we ask you now to reveal to us when we are angry the feeling we are trying to cover up, or the idol you are trying to point out to us. Holy Spirit, help us to look at our anger and to learn from it through you.

Pause for everyone to ask the Holy Spirit to give a spirit of curiosity the next time they are angry.

And now Father, we submit all of ourselves to you - including our emotional lives and our anger. We ask you to pour out your righteousness and your wisdom. Transform us into the image of Christ. In the name of Jesus we pray - Amen.