



Fully You: Unlocking your identity in Christ
“An Unlikely Gift” (Genesis 4:3-8; James 1:19-21)
Derrick Shields, August 25, 2019

Today we continue our “Fully You” series, as we take a look at the “unlikely gift” of Anger.

* In our struggle with shame, we encounter an unlikely gift: **Anger**. (Are you surprised?)

1. Anger is a God-given emotion.

- Anger is a sign. It is telling us something. It is a pointer to shame operating within us.
 - It is an indication that we are trying to meet our primary needs *on our own*.
- Righteous anger is a healthy response to the perversion of God’s design and goodness.
- Jesus models healthy anger for us. (Matthew 21:12-13)

* Genesis 4:3-5 Cain is angry! He is feeling rejection and shame because God had no regard for his offering (*that’s a whole other sermon*). Cain is feeling “what’s wrong with me?” His anger is pointing to his deeper brokenness and shame.

2. We all get angry. We just express this differently...

“annoyed, irritated, frustrated, resentful, provoked, . . .” Can we just own it? – “I’m angry.”

- We are typically angry when we feel threatened. Our anger is an effort to have control; to protect ourselves, validate ourselves, empower ourselves.
- We can stuff or bury our anger, but it will find its way out: Sarcasm, Silent treatment, Passive-Aggressive behavior, and more.

3. HOW we respond to anger defines whether it will be a force for good or evil.

- Genesis 4:6-7 God addresses Cain’s anger and shame... “if you do what is right (respond positively to this anger, this sign of your deeper shame and woundedness), you will be accepted (I can handle your hurt and anger; you can bring it), but this sin is crouching at your door – you must master it (you must face this anger, process what it’s revealing, respond to it positively, and you CAN).”

* Cain did **not** respond well – “he attacked his brother and killed him.” Genesis 4:8
It’s not indicated in the story, but it’s likely that some time went by between the unaccepted offering and Cain murdering his brother. Time for Cain to hold onto his shame and anger; to stew on it; to nurture it . . . until it “mastered” him, giving birth to sin and destruction.

- * Typically, time is a help to us in “mastering” our anger. Brain studies reveal that when we get angry our brain processing shifts from the rational, cognitive center to the emotional, instinctive center. Unchecked anger actually makes us “dumber.”
- * So - if we are not nursing our shame, jealousy, and anger – pausing actually HELPS us shift our brain processing *back*. We can then live in the wisdom of James 1:19-21 . . .
“let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for a person’s anger does not bring about the righteous life of God.”

Three tips:

1. Identify what consistently makes you angry.
2. Learn to take a time-out (pause, breathe) and allow your brain to shift “back” to reason.
3. Express anger using your FIRST, primary emotion (what you felt at the first of the encounter). Anger is a secondary response.

“Lord, help us to understand our anger and respond to it well before you, in your grace. Holy Spirit, help us to live out the practical tips above. Teach us ‘in our anger, not to sin’ (Ephesians 4:26-27). Help us to embrace well this “unlikely gift.”