

Combustible
Breaking Free
Eph. 4:22-32
Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Question (get everyone involved in discussion): What is one thing that can make you really angry?

Transition: We're in a series called, "Breaking Free." We started it on Easter Sunday, when we saw that because Jesus died and is risen from the dead, we actually have the possibility for a new life or new identity now. Today we're looking into how we can break free from harmful, destructive anger. To do that I want to show you **three things about anger: the goodness of anger, the distortion of anger, and the healing of anger**. We're going to look at it largely through the perspective of Paul's words in **Eph. 4**.

Read Ephesians 4:22-24

- Pastor Josh says that the image of "putting on the old self" and "putting on the new self" is one of taking off and putting on a set of clothes.
 - If putting off old habits and patterns is like taking off old clothes, what does that imply in terms of a) frequency, b) our responsibility, and c) hope for change?
 - The assumption here is that we have a new identity in Christ. How does this new identity help us put off the old and put on the new?
 - Verse 23 shows one way of putting on the new self is a transformation in "the attitude of your minds." Have you ever thought of your mind as a battlefield of old and new thought patterns?
 - Verse 24 gives the goal or standard for our change. How does it describe this?

Read Ephesians 4:25-31

- Go through all the synonyms or variations of anger in this passage, and define and describe what they are: bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, malice, etc.
- In verse 26, what two principles do we learn about anger? Hints:
 - Is anger always sin? If not, when is it (be specific)?
 - How can anger be good? Provide examples.
 - "The biblical ideal is not NO anger, but SLOW anger." Give one example of God's anger in the OT and Jesus' anger in the NT. How does their anger serve a good and loving purpose? Can we be righteously angry like God?
 - Also, should we take the phrase "do not let the sun go down on your anger" literally or is it a principle (and if so, what is the principle)?
- Verse 22 describes our old patterns as "deceitful." How can anger deceive us and/or how can we deceive ourselves about our anger?

- Verse 27 commands, “Do not give the devil a foothold.” How does nurturing our anger give Satan a foothold in our lives? What does that look like?
- How can we be more “surgical” (precise) with our anger instead of blowing up?
- Similarly, we often get angry because we don’t know how to set boundaries. What is the difference between setting an appropriate boundary and being inappropriately angry?
- On Sunday we heard that our anger is distorted because our loves are disordered.
 - What does it mean that our loves are disordered?
 - How does this distort our anger?
- “Inappropriate anger shows you what you love most”: that you love something more than God. Do you agree with this statement?
 - When you get angry, what provokes it?
 - What is your anger ultimately defending? (Examples – angry because your identity has been wounded, because you’re not in control, because you lack empathy to understand other’s idiosyncrasies, because your comfort has been violated?)
 - Why do many people carry anger at God? How does that anger fuel other outbursts of anger?
 - What does your inappropriate anger say about how you view God? Do you doubt his sovereignty? His love?
- The answer to how our anger can be healed is at the end of the passage, in v. 32. What is the answer?
 - Josh states that “your anger will only start to heal when you realize the anger that Jesus absorbed for you,” in his suffering and death on the cross.
 - How did Jesus absorb our unjust anger at God? How did he absorb the anger (from God, at our sin) that we rightly deserved?
 - Try this exercise: Imagine yourself as a teenager screaming at (or holding a severe grudge against) your parents for a boundary they set or a time they said “no.” Imagine giving out all that abuse, but your parent doesn’t strike back. That’s what Jesus did for you. Take 30 seconds of silence just to absorb that truth. How do you feel?

Let’s move into Prayer:

- Share about the needs for prayer that you have.
- If your group has a good level of trust and vulnerability, you may offer people a chance to share what lingering hurts, or causes of anger, they’re carrying, and then pray for them specifically. Feel free to split into smaller groups if this helps.
- Among our prayer requests, let’s include praying for one another to put off the old habits of destructive anger and where appropriate, to put on new habits of loving anger: accountability, social justice, parental discipline, etc.