GETTING A GRIP ON MY ANGER  
Proverbs 16.32

We are continuing a series on the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Scriptures. Contrary to modern understandings, wisdom has a divine origin, not a human one. As we read wisdom literature, we can easily get the mistaken impression that wisdom involves the memorization and application of certain texts. The fact is, wisdom is not just common sense based upon experience; it is a result of a relationship with God.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9.10

The divine origin of wisdom means that at its foundation wisdom is not a lesson to be learned but a relationship to enjoy. The wisdom we see in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs did not come from simply human origin; instead it comes from the very heart of God.

A definition that I heard years ago seems to really apply. Wisdom is seeing and responding to life from God’s perspective. It really is about life lived in response to a relationship. Those responses are skills that can be developed as our relationship with God deepens.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. James 1.5

7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.  
8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. Proverbs 4.7-8

Wisdom then becomes an attitude and an action. It is a skill that you can develop. The book of Proverbs addresses many of the issues that we commonly experience everyday of our lives. One of the common challenges we face is that of “anger.”

Better a patient (slow tempered) person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city. Proverbs 16.32

How do you get a grip on your temper? The book of Proverbs provides some very helpful insights.

1. WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF UNCONTROLLED ANGER.

An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins. Proverbs 29.22

A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel. Proverbs 15.18

Whoever brings ruin (“provokes to anger”) on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise. Proverbs 11.29
2. AFTER THE INITIAL REACTION, WE NEED TO REFLECT BEFORE REACTING

Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.  Proverbs 29.11

Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.  Proverbs 12.16

A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.  Proverbs 19.11

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”  Isaiah 53.9

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.  1 Peter 2.21-23

The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding (“cool of spirit”) is even-tempered.  Proverbs 19.11

3. WE NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS IN OUR RESPONSE

Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.  Proverbs 21.23

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.  Proverbs 15.1

4. SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.  Ephesians 4.26-27

Tremble and (“in your anger”) do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.  Psalm 4.4

If we keep the angry feelings on the inside, we have a divinely appointed time frame within which to get it resolved. The outside limit is by sundown, or before we go to bed. This doesn't give us permission to have a bad attitude until that time.

Let me suggest several steps in the resolving process. But first, be sure the whole process is done in conversation with God, discussing each point and asking for his wisdom.

1st Be honest, admit your anger.

2nd Identify the cause, the loss, the pain, or the offense.

3rd Forgiveness is essential.

4th Plan what you will do about it.

Some more final thoughts:

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.  Ephesians 4.29-32