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Pastor Jonathan Falwell

The Door: Wisdom Replaces Anger

Scripture: Various

Summary: In the first sermon in a topical series focused on the book of Proverbs, Pastor Jonathan looks at the topic of anger, offering practical advice on how to deal with anger issues in others and ourselves.

Today we're going to begin a new series. It's a series I'm excited about because it is a practical series that we can apply right into our lives today. It's not something that we need to spend time thinking about; it's not something that we need to spend time trying to figure out how to do. It's a book that we're going to be looking at and studying over these next few weeks that gives us the answers to what we need on how to do it today, how to do it now. We're going to be studying the book of Proverbs, how to act and how to live and how to walk daily with God in our lives, with God leading us every step of the way.

In the passages that we're going to be looking at today and over the next six or seven weeks, we have to understand that this book was given to us for a very specific reason. It was given to us so that we would know what to do, we would know how to live when everything else doesn't seem to give us any answers. We live in a world today where answers are not easy to come by, but when you hold the Word of God in your hands, when you read the Word of God, when you study the Word of God, we are given the answers, given the truth, and I believe firmly—and the things we're going to be talking about, it's going to be a topical study of the Word of God, a topical study of the book of Proverbs.

The reason that we are doing that is because when you read through Proverbs, and I hope you are doing that—in fact, if you're going along with us on our journey with our devotional book each and every week you've probably now read two proverbs, because every Saturday we're reading the proverbs. We're reading through the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs. We've read Proverbs 1 and 2 and we're going to keep reading through and find that in every passage, every chapter that God gives us some incredible truths to apply to our lives in a topical sense.

You can read one chapter and it gives us great information about how to deal with finances and how to deal with anger, how to deal with relationships and communication, and then the next chapter there's great verses on how to deal with anger and how to deal with relationships and communication and finances, and then you read the next chapter and there's great verses on how to deal with anger and how to deal with finances and communication and all of these types of things. So we decided rather than do a chapter-by-chapter study, we're going to do a topical

study and actually pull through the topics that most of us, if not all of us, are dealing with on a daily basis and apply those truths into our lives, pulling from the entire book of Proverbs.

Ben Gutierrez, one of our pastors here at Thomas Road, has a great quote about the book of Proverbs, about why we are going to spend time studying this book. Ben says, “The book of Psalms focuses on man’s relationship to God. The book of Proverbs focuses on man’s relationship to man based on our relationship to God.” In other words, how we treat each other is directly proportional to how we allow God to work in our own lives.

So that is what we are going to be doing, and I want to talk about the purpose and why we’re doing this, and it’s found in the first few verses in Proverbs 1. It says in Proverbs 1, beginning with verse 1, “These are the proverbs of Solomon, David’s son, king of Israel. Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise. Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives,” I think all of us would say that we want disciplined and successful lives, “to help them do what is right, just, and fair.”

Verse 4 continues, “These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.” That basically means by studying the book of Proverbs, by pulling the truths from the book of Proverbs and applying them into our lives, it will help each and every one of us who don’t quite have it all together.

With a show of hands, is there anybody here today that can honestly say, “I really just don’t quite have it all together yet”? I better see every single hand in the room up, because that’s all of us. When this passage says it gives wisdom to the simple, let me let you in on a secret here, and it’s probably not one that you are going to like a whole lot, but we’re all simple. We are all not where we need to be with God. All of us don’t have it all figured out, and God has given us this book in a practical sense, in a practical way, so that we the simple, me and you, can gain wisdom. Anybody here want wisdom?

When you read this passage in Proverbs 1, toward the end in 33 it says, “But all who listen to me will live in peace, untroubled by fear of harm.” Wouldn’t that be a good verse when you get to the end of life you could say, “You know what? That’s how I lived my life. I lived my life focusing on and seeking out wisdom. I listened to God, and you know what He did? He allowed me to live in peace.” That’s something all of us are looking for.

I want to give you a key verse that we’re going to be reading each and every week throughout this series, and it comes from Proverbs 9:12, “If you become wise,” in other words, if you find the wisdom of God. Notice it doesn’t say if you become smart, if you have a degree, if you have a PhD, if you’ve read a lot of books and gotten good grades in school. It doesn’t say that. “If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom,” in other words, if you dismiss it, don’t listen to the words of God, “you will be the one to suffer.” That is a great verse for a key verse for all of us here.

Now we talked a few weeks ago about how this is a year of transformation for our church, transformation in our lives with God and our walk with Him, transformation in our homes, in our families, which will obviously result in transformation in our church. We understand that when

you read the passages that we're going to read throughout the next few weeks, that's exactly what the Word of God was written to do.

Look what it says in Proverbs 24:3, "A house [your home] is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense. Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables." In other words, if you build your life and your home based on the principles of God's Word and seeking after Him, your home will be filled with value beyond anything you could ever imagine. And that's what we all want. That is the desire in our heart. So what we're going to be doing is talking about some issues that we need to apply in our lives.

We have titled this sermon series *The Door* because it tells us in Proverbs 8:1, "Does not wisdom cry out and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the high hill, beside the way where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors." In other words, God's wisdom, God's purpose, God's plan is knocking at the door of our hearts; it's knocking at the door of our mind; it's knocking at the doors of our family; it's knocking literally at the door of your house, and so many of us today are not experiencing the value that God wants to bring into our lives and into our homes because we have not opened the door to the wisdom that God wants to give.

And so today we're going to start talking about a topic that all of us deal with; every single one of us have dealt with this at one time or another and probably most of us are dealing with it today, and that is the topic, the issue of anger. How we respond to each other when conflict arises, when challenges are there, when problems hit us head on. How we respond to that. Whether we deal with it right, through godly wisdom, or whether we lash out in anger. And there are many people in this room, many people listening to my voice, many people in Danville and Roanoke right now that are dealing with anger and not knowing how to control their tempers.

So today we're going to ask and three questions: 1) How do I deal with someone who has anger issues? 2) What if that person is me? 3) Is it ever okay to be angry? Now this is a practical sermon. The sermon notes, you can write them down if you want to. If you've got the app they're already there. You can follow along.

First question: How do I deal with someone who has anger issues? A couple of things we want to point out. First, always react right. Always react right. Our response to someone when they lash out at us in anger determines the future of that relationship. That's especially important when it comes to those in our own home. Proverbs 29:11 says, "Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back."

Now we talk about wisdom that knocks at our door and we talk about anger specifically and we talk about the issue, the idea of how we react right and what we do in response to those who lash out in anger at us. There are a couple of things that I want to use today as an illustration. Oftentimes when we find ourselves in a situation where we are being lashed out at, where someone is angry at us and they are yelling and screaming at us, reacting right requires a step in the right direction for us. It's kind of the idea of if you're in a conflict with someone, when you're having an argument with someone, when you look at this, a couple of cups here and a little pot of coffee here, you get the idea that we are going to have a nice little sit-down

discussion, aren't we? We are going to be able to sit down over a nice cup of coffee and have a nice conversation. It's going to be adult, mature, the kind of discussion or conversation you might have at a Starbucks or under a tree when the wind is blowing just perfectly. It conveys the idea this is going to be a calm discussion.

Now I wouldn't know anything about coffee because I've never had coffee in my life, but I know coffee is important to people. In fact, this morning at 5:45 I actually went downstairs and got a cup of coffee and I took it to my wife and woke her up with a cup of coffee for her birthday. Isn't that cool? Yeah, I'm going to do it again next year.

The other option that a lot of us deal with is that when we have situations come up it's kind of the idea of these: it's Red Bull. This doesn't convey the idea of sitting down and having a nice conversation, a calm, mature, adult conversation where everything is peaceful and tranquil. This conveys the idea that once you drink this, you're going to take this can and smash it on your head and put your head through a wall. That is what most of us do when most of us are faced with conflict. We respond in the same way in which that person has responded to us. When they lash out in anger, we lash out in anger. When they are mad at us, we get mad at them. When they yell at us, we yell back at them. And we all do it. I've done it. You've done it. My kids know that I've done it.

In fact, Nicholas, it's funny, he found this verse that says, "slow to anger," so now whenever he does something I get mad at him about, and he knows that I'm upset, he looks at me, cute as can be, "Slow to anger, Dad." It changes everything.

That is true in every situation. React right. It says it here in Proverbs 29, "A fool vents their anger." Anybody here want to be called a fool? I don't think so. Proverbs 26:4 says it this way, "Don't answer the foolish arguments of fools or you will become as foolish as they are." In other words, when someone lashes out at you in anger and you do it right back at them, all you have done is proven to the world that you are as big a fool as the person you are yelling at. That is according to the Word of God.

The passage in Proverbs 15, "A gentle answer deflects anger. Harsh words make tempers flare." There are so many couples that when conflict hits—it happens all the time in a marriage—that when an argument begins they just begin to yell at each other and it just goes on and on and on and on. This passage talks about a gentle answer at first changes everything.

So the first thing, react right. Second answer to how to deal with those who have anger issues: don't take it personally what they are doing to you. Don't let it destroy you. Don't let it destroy your spirit. Proverbs 12:16, "A fool," again, I love how they keep using the word "fool." In other words, if you act like this, you are a fool. It says, "A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted."

When you, in your marriage or in your family or in your relationship with someone else—someone you're dating, work with, at school with—when you lash out in anger at them, if that person allows that to be something that hurts their feelings, they may not even say anything back and you may feel like you've won, let me tell you what you've done to that person. You have

begun to chip away at their spirit, and I promise you, you will destroy them, which guaranteed, 100% money-back guarantee, it will destroy your relationship with that person. And I promise you, I've seen it as a pastor, Charlie Davidson, one of our marriage counselors, has seen it over and over again, that marriages that have been destroyed, divorces that have happened because one person in that relationship has taken to heart everything mean and angry and nasty that the other person has said, and it has destroyed them.

The Scripture says don't take it personally.

Third answer to this question: resolve to resolve. In other words, make a commitment, make it your point, make it a decision that what you are going to do is focus on fixing with a right heart. In Proverbs 15:18, "A hot-tempered person starts fights, but a cool-tempered person stops them." In other words, when you are doing things the right way, when you've allowed wisdom to come into the door of your heart, to come into the door of your mind, to enter into your life, what will happen is that when the fights begin, which they will—my wife and I, we've been married 20 years, and man, we've had some great arguments. We can fight with the best of them. It's awesome. And my dad used to say, when he would talk about his relationship with my mom, "We've got some knock-down, drag-outs in our lives. Divorce was never an option. Murder, maybe." Dad always made that statement and we all laughed.

You're going to have an argument. If you've been married more than 12 minutes, you're going to have a fight, okay? I promise you it's going to come. But if you make the decision early on, and maybe some of you are newlyweds or maybe getting ready to be married, make a covenant with that person, because right now, if you're not married yet or you just got married, things are good. You can make inroads now. You can get them to agree to things that you won't be able to do later, okay? Make the covenant now that when arguments hit, when you fight—which you will—that your focus and determination is this: We're going to focus on fixing it. We're going to resolve to resolve it. When it starts—which it will—the purpose of that argument is not to continue to argue and allow it to continue to escalate, but rather the purpose of the beginning of the argument is to come to a resolution that is according to the wisdom and the Word of God. Resolve to resolve.

Second question: What if that person is me? What if I'm the one who has anger issues? What if I'm the one who is dealing with that kind of problem? A couple of things you need to understand. First, it will destroy your reputation. It is never okay to be known as an angry person. How many of you have ever seen the movie *Toy Story*? It's a great film, great story. But you remember Mr. Potato Head in that movie? There is a situation where he's mad about something or going to a fight or come up to some kind of issue and remember he says, "I've got to put on my angry eyes." Remember that? He has to put on his angry eyes so that he can show them that he is tough and mean.

There are a lot of people that have put on your angry eyes and you've forgotten where you left the nice ones. There are a lot of people that have done that. People know you're always upset about something. You are always mad about something. I saw yesterday on Twitter Charles said that he was at lunch somewhere and he said, "I can't believe it. I'm sitting next to a table of

people who are upset and complaining because they went to a church dinner and the spaghetti noodles were too short.”

I wrote him back on Twitter, “Welcome to my Monday morning in box.”

There are a lot of people that get upset and angry about the dumbest, stupidest, most insignificant things. There are a lot of wives right now that are elbowing their husbands. Because we all do it at times. And understand that when you begin to be known as an angry person, when you begin to allow that to shape what people know you as, it will destroy your reputation. And you’ve heard it said a million times, it takes years to build a good reputation. It takes seconds to destroy it.

Anger will always destroy your reputation. Second thing you need to understand: who you hang around with determines the way that you act. Peer pressure is a very real thing. Look what it says in Proverbs 22:24-25, “Don’t befriend angry people [or associate with hot-tempered people], or you will learn to be just like them and endanger your soul.” In other words, if you have an issue with anger, if you have a problem controlling your temper, then don’t you dare hang around with other people who have a similar problem because all you’re going to do is make each other better at being worse. Don’t hang around with them. The Bible says don’t even befriend them.

If you have an issue with anger, get away from the people in your life who have a similar problem so that you don’t end up being worse and just like them. Make sure you understand that peer pressure is a very real thing. Proverbs 14:17 says, “Short-tempered people do foolish things and schemers are hated.”

Third thing to understand if that person is you: it will always escalate. When you lash out in anger, when you allow your temper to be out of control, what will happen is the end result will be something that you never had in mind the moment you got mad. It always goes bigger, higher, worse, more heated than anything you ever imagined when you first started. In fact, when you first started getting angry, the reason you got angry is you wanted to prove a point. When you first started to get angry, you wanted to show yourself to be right and the other person to be wrong, and your goal is when you do this is you want to prove they are wrong and your hope is that when you do it they are going to say, “You are absolutely right. I can’t believe how dumb I was.”

It never happens that way. Husbands and wives, do you agree with me on that? You know when your wife tells you that you did something wrong, husband, rarely do you say, “Oh sweetheart, I can’t believe how lucky I am, because had you not told me that, I would never have known that. Oh my goodness, I’m about to cry because of how lucky I am.”

Never happens that way. What happens is that when one person lashes out in anger the other person has to respond to an equal or higher level, and then you respond at an equal or higher level, and it goes on and on and on and on and there are marriages right now today that are in trouble because you never understood that when tempers are out of control, it will always escalate beyond anything that you ever imagined.

Look what the Scripture says in Proverbs 30:33, “As the beating of cream yields butter and striking the nose causes bleeding, so stirring up anger causes quarrels.” It always goes beyond what you can imagine.

My son Nicholas, when he was younger there were times when he’s get upset about stuff, really mad, but it was always awesome because whenever he got really mad at me, when he thought that I’d really blown it and he wanted to come after me, when he was really upset, all I had to do was look at him and say, “Nicholas, don’t you smile.” And he always, instantly everything would change. He’d start smiling. He could be furious, he could have flames shooting out of his ears—which a couple of times he almost did—he could have all that stuff, but the minute I said “Don’t you smile,” everything changed. Everything completely changed and he was happy.

It happened yesterday. We were having lunch together. He slept in yesterday and we didn’t go to breakfast like we normally do, which was a bad start to the normal day, and so we went to lunch and he hadn’t eaten breakfast and he was hungry. And when he gets hungry, he’s not the kindest person sometimes. So we’re sitting at the table and he was mad about everything. I tried to take a picture of him—I love taking pictures—and he tried to take my phone and delete it and throw it across the room, “Don’t you take a picture.” He was not happy about this.

I said, “Dude, what’s going on with you?” Then I realized, oh yes, he hasn’t eaten yet. So I looked at him, he’s 12 years old, and said, “Nicholas, don’t you smile.” He’s really going to hate me today, by the way. He ate a few minutes later and all of a sudden he turned around, happy as can be, sweet as can be, laughing, and I looked over and said, “Welcome back!”

That’s a funny story, but the problem is that when we have that situation in our lives, when that is who we are, when we let it escalate and go out of control it will destroy the relationships and we, I promise you, if this church is going to do what God called us to do, then the homes, the families, the couples, the children, the parents, this has got to stop. It’s got to change. It always escalates.

Next, what if it’s me? It hurts everyone around you. Pain as a result of anger is very real. You’ve heard that phrase that kids use, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” That’s the biggest lie that’s ever been told on the elementary school playground. I’m going to tell you something: if somebody hits me with a stick, it’s going to break my arm. Guess what? It’s going to heal. I’m going to be mad and probably hit them back with a stick, but it’s going to heal. “Words may never hurt me.” That is an absolute lie, because words destroy. Words destroy your spirit. Words destroy marriages. They destroy relationships.

They destroy the church. There are people that you are playing a role in destroying this church because you are busy in gossip about someone else because of something they’ve done to you, and you can’t let it go, and it will destroy this church. It has happened over and over and over again in the history of churches for 2,000 years. It’s a constant thing. You know why? Because we never understand that what we say and how we treat others and how we act toward others, it brings pain that is very real that will not quickly subside.

Proverbs 27:3, “A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but the resentment caused by a fool is even heavier.”

Proverbs 16:32, “Better to be patient than powerful. Better to have self-control than to conquer a city.” In other words, there are families that have it all—nice house, money in the bank, job, nice cars, everything you can imagine—as far as the world goes, you’re set, you’re good, but because of the way you treat each other in that home, you have absolutely nothing. Nothing that matters.

“Better,” it says, “to be patient [rather than short-tempered] rather than powerful. Better to have self-control than to conquer a whole city.” Better to have the world at your finger tips. Better to have power. Better to have thousands of people who listen to you and work for you and you control. Better to have wisdom, self-control, than any of that stuff, because that stuff doesn’t mean anything because of the destruction that a life that is out of control brings.

Third question: Is anger ever okay? Yes. Ephesians 4:26 says, “Be angry and do not sin.” In other words, God gives us permission to be angry, to be angry about sin, to be angry about things that take us away from the direction that God wants us to go, take us away from the Word of God, to be angry about that. And when we are angry about that, that anger better point us in a purposeful direction of, okay, we’re angry about this so let’s fix it, let’s change it, let’s become better, do things differently.

So a practical application. Whether you are that person or the person that is dealing with someone who has anger issues, how do I change? How do I deal with this? What do I do now? First, settle it right now. Settle it now. Swallow your pride and get it right. There are marriages in this church that have ended because one of the people in that relationship could not swallow their pride and simply say, “I’m sorry.” There are marriages in trouble today because you have allowed your temper to get out of control. You’ve allowed your anger to get out of control, and you are not big enough, you’re not wise enough, you’re not man enough or woman enough to simply say, “I am sorry.”

And listen, we all deal with it. No one wants to have to admit that they are wrong. No one wants to actually come to that place. Ephesians 4:26, the last part of the verse says, “Don’t let the sun go down on your wrath.” You know what that says? Don’t you dare go to bed tonight until you get it fixed. And I’m telling you, there are people in this room right now who may not have spoken to each other in years and one of you sits over here and the other sits over there and you go out that door and you have an unspoken arrangements that as long as we never cross paths, never see each other or have to run into each other, all is well, but the minute you do, all the world falls apart again.

Listen: Some of you that are like that need to swallow your pride and settle it today, and say, “You know what? I’ve been an absolute idiot.” And I’ll tell you something, if you’re holding a grudge against someone else, this is not in the Bible but it should be, you are an absolute idiot. Okay? You get that? Grudges do not honor God. Get over it. Get it settled and move on. Settle it now.

Second thing we've got to do: always be ready to forgive. When that person comes to you and swallows their pride and says, "You know what? I'm sorry." Your response is, "Well, you should be!" Have you ever said that? There's one. I've said it.

Someone says, "I'm really sorry." "Well, you know what? I told you you were wrong." Listen, you know what you've just done? You've just confirmed to that person that you're an idiot.

Swallow the pride on both sides, always be ready to forgive. Look what the Bible says in Proverbs 19:11, "Sensible people control their tempers; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs." You want to heal relationships? You want to heal your marriage? When your husband or wife or child or whatever says, "I'm sorry for what I did," don't you dare say, "Well, you should be. You should do things..." No, you say, "Thank you. I accept your apology. And you know what? Give me a big hug and let's move forward and let's honor God." That's what the response should be.

Settle it now, always be ready to forgive, and if you're that person, admit you have a problem and get help right now. Admit you have a problem and change it now. You see, the problem is that even in the middle of a sermon like this when you hear God's Word and you hear the wisdom and truth that is given and you might understand and agree with it and think, "That's good stuff. I like what it says," then you walk out of here and it's not going to do one bit of good because it's knocking at your door and you're not willing to let it in.

Let me tell you what the Bible says about you. Proverbs 26:7, "A proverb [wisdom, truth] in the mouth of a fool is as useless as a paralyzed leg." In other words, if you hear the Word of God that's given here and do not apply it and do not allow it to change you, you do not let God and His wisdom enter into your heart, your mind and your home, then all the information that is given in this book, all of the things that I've said to you today is absolutely useless and you might as well have gone out and played golf. That's basically what it says.

So here's the deal. If we are going to be the kind of people who benefit from the wisdom of God, then we have to be the kind of people who submit to the will of God. And that comes from all of us today saying, "God, I know I've been a fool. I know I've been doing wrong, and I want to change. I want to get it under control. My prayer for you today is that is exactly what you will do now. Admit it and get help, and that help comes from the Word of God and it comes from His Word revealed to you and it comes from His love in your life.

Some of you have heard what I have to say, you agree with it and you know that it's about you. You're honest enough with yourself to admit the fact that, "Yep, that's me. I've got a problem with temper. I've got a problem with anger. I've not been responding right. I've not been treating people right. That's me. I get it." Well, if you get it and you understand that it's about you, what are you going to do about it? Because if we don't allow the wisdom that we hear and the direction that God wants to have in our lives, if we don't let it in, it's not going to change anything and you're going to walk out of here tomorrow and the same thing is going to happen all over again. So there has to be a tipping point, a place where you say, "Okay, I'm going to change." Maybe today is the tipping point where you say, "Yes, I've got to change."

Maybe you're here today and you've heard everything I've said and you think it's great, you think, "Yeah, I have to do this. Those are great truths from the Bible and I have to apply them to my life," but you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior. You might as well take everything I said, scratch out the paper, ball the paper up and throw it in the trash can on the way out, because it's impossible for you to actually put into practice and do what we talked about today unless He is alive in your heart and the Holy Spirit is directing you—a Spirit-filled life; that's what it's got to be.

So you need to realize that you are a sinner in desperate need of a Savior, that only God can save you from your sins through His Son Jesus Christ, when He came to this earth and died on the cross, was buried and rose again three days later, and we understand that if we believe in our hearts and confess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord, that He was raised from the dead, call on the name of the Lord and we will be saved (Romans 10:13), maybe that's what you need.

As we sing this through one time, I'll ask you to admit you have a problem. Admit it right now and say, "God, I'm sorry. I'm wrong."

(Singing: "I Surrender All")

Men, be a man. If you've got issues with the way you treat your wife or treat your kids, be a man, admit it and change it. Ladies, got an issue? Be a man. Change it. Get it right. Be the kind of woman that honors God in everything. Kids, be mature. You know you want that. Do it so it honors God. We're not going to see transformation in our homes until we see transformation in our hearts, and it starts with how we treat each other. If you're dealing with this, today is the day to change.

Lord, today we thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the wisdom that it brings, the life change that it offers. We thank you for the hope that it gives. I pray for the men, women, young people, whatever situation they are dealing with, whatever challenge they are going through, whatever conflict they are in the middle of. Give them the wisdom that comes from you. Help them to see what it is that they are doing wrong and help them to change because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their lives, leading and guiding them each and every day. God, I pray that you will heal relationships today. Allow us to begin to treat each other the right way, the grudges that are being held will be dropped at the feet of the cross, and that you would do miraculous work in the people, the homes, the families, the individuals of this church because I know that is the first step to seeing revival in this church. God, I pray you will do it today. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

God bless you. Have a great day.

Keywords: wisdom, proverbs, anger, peer pressure, relationships, forgiveness, angry, reputation, resolving conflict, controlling temper