When Anger Festers

When you're hurt or humiliated, does it make you angry? And if it makes you angry, what do you do about it?

- Elsa would tell you to sing a catchy song and let it go.
- Lewis Black would tell you to turn it into a comedy routine.
- Carl Ericsson might tell you to bottle up the anger and let it simmer … for 50 years.

Ericsson was 73 when he knocked on the door of an old classmate, Norman Johnson. Ericsson hadn't seen Johnson in years, but when he verified it was the same Norman he knew in school in the 50s, he shot him dead.

Ericsson's justification? Fifty years earlier, in the high school locker room, *Johnson had put a jockstrap on his head.*

I'm not justifying what Johnson did, but it was probably one of those adolescent pranks the other boys quickly forgot about. But not Ericsson. For him, that humiliation festered for 50 years until he rang Johnson's doorbell.

So back to my original question: how do you handle those things that make you angry? **Jesus would tell you to deal with it appropriately.**

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed the issue of anger. He equated anger with murder, and as both Cain and Carl Ericsson can attest, murder can certainly grow out of anger. Here's my brief summation of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:21-26:

Seek reconciliation and resolve differences.

I'll admit that is hard to do, but it's the only way to live a holy life before God.

"Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness — without it no one will see the Lord. 15 Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many" (Heb. 12:14-15).

When we leave things unresolved with another person:

1. We miss out on fully experiencing God's grace—and we can keep others from fully experiencing God's grace.
2. We leave a bitter root that, when left unchecked and unresolved, grows into something nasty.

Anger doesn't solve a thing. Forgiveness, on the other hand, changes lives.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ" (Eph. 4:32).