

The background of the entire image is a white, textured surface, possibly paper or fabric, covered with numerous splatters and drips of bright red liquid. The splatters are of various sizes and shapes, some forming larger, irregular blotches. Several thick, vertical drips of red liquid hang from the bottom edge of the central red blotch. The overall effect is one of violence or trauma.

SEEING  
**RED**



Touching Lives  
with James Merritt

# SEEING RED

*Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt*

## ***Series Summary***

There is a lot that the Word of God has to say about controlling our anger and our temper. In this series, Seeing Red, we are going to take a look at exactly what Scripture tells us about managing our anger, but maybe not in the way you would expect, because guess who saw red on more than one occasion? Jesus. Jesus got angry, although Jesus never sinned. You see, anger has gotten a bad rap in a way. It is not always wrong to be angry. In fact, sometimes it is wrong not to be angry. So in this study, we are going to learn from Jesus that anger is appropriate when it is expressed at the right time, in the right place, for the right reason.

Cleaning House

Seeing Red | Week 1 | John 2:15-21; Matthew 21:13-16

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Today, we are going to look at probably the most angry that Jesus ever got. In fact, he not only expressed his anger verbally; he expressed it physically. Probably the most shocking picture of Jesus in the New Testament is when he cleaned house literally. He cleansed the temple. In fact, he did it twice. We are going to be looking at two passages of scripture – the second chapter of John and the twenty-first chapter of Matthew. In John, he cleansed the temple at the beginning of his ministry and in Matthew he did it at the end of his ministry. This story answers the two questions, “What made him angry?” and “Who was his anger directed toward?”

KEY POINTS

1. We Should Care About The Welfare Of The Temple.

When we read today’s key passages, we see that the religious people were basically turning the temple into their own personal ATMs. They were conning people out of money, practically stealing from them with their corruption. But Jesus wasn’t having it. He saw exactly what was going on, and He wasn’t going to let it happen any longer.

When Jesus saw what was going on inside the temple, He called it a den of robbers, because a place where thieves hide is called a den. It is one thing to turn a house into a den of thieves, but it is another thing to turn God’s house into a den of thieves. All of that to say, we should always care about the welfare of God’s temple in what goes on in the inside of God’s temple and what comes outside of God’s temple.

2. We Should Care About The Worship In The Temple.

Now the first time Jesus cleansed the temple this is what he preached. “To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!’ His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me’” (John 2:16-17).

The only thing that ought to be going on in God’s house is God’s worship. Anything that degrades God’s worship, detracts from God’s worship, defrauds God’s worship should be castigated and eliminated.

Horizontal lines for notes.

# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Cleaning House

Seeing Red | Week 1 | John 2:15-21; Matthew 21:13-16

### 3. We Should Care About The Witness Of The Temple.

Keep in mind there are two purposes of the temple. There is the worship that goes on inside the temple, but there is the witness that goes on outside the temple. It is immediately after Jesus' martial arts skills that everything has died down that we read these words, "The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple courts, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant. 'Do you hear what these children are saying?' they asked him" (Matthew 21:14-16).

Matthew calls what Jesus did "wonderful" and the blind and the lame and the sick came rushing to Jesus and even children broke out in praising God. Even though all four gospels record the cleansing of the temple, Matthew is the only gospel writer to record this healing. I think I know why. Matthew at one time was the ultimate outsider. He was a tax collector. He was seen as the lowest of the low and the most lost of the lost. Yet, when he came to Jesus, Jesus cleaned his house and saved him.

### NOTES

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Cleaning House

*Seeing Red | Week 1 | John 2:15-21; Matthew 21:13-16*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When was a time you saw merited anger within the church? What was your response to this situation?
2. How do you think Jesus would react if He walked into your church on a Sunday morning?
3. Is there something happening around you in your life currently that makes you rightfully angry? Is there something you need to do about it?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Calling Out

*Seeing Red | Week 2 | Matthew 23:1-13, 27-28*

### INTRODUCTION

In the last public sermon that Jesus ever preached, He was calling out hypocritical holiness and counterfeit Christianity. Frankly, this is not a seeker-friendly topic. This is not a feel-good topic. This is not your best life now topic, but it is a topic that everyone and anyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus and every church needs to hear about, think about, and talk about. In this sermon we're going to look at, Jesus says there are three things that we need to do as we call out counterfeits, including the times we may be counterfeit ourselves.

### KEY POINTS

#### 1. Recognize The Core Of A Counterfeit

There's an old saying that goes, "even a broken clock is right twice a day." That is why even though as Christians we believe that all other religions outside of Christianity are ultimately wrong, it doesn't mean they are always wrong. There is truth that can be found in every religion and that is the core of a counterfeit.

A counterfeit looks like the real thing and sometimes it can even teach what is right. At the end of the day, what makes a counterfeit a counterfeit is not what it looks like on the outside, but the fact that what is on the outside doesn't really match up especially in a person with what is on the inside.

This is why Jesus said the problem was not so much what they were preaching, but what they were practicing. In essence, Jesus said, "Most of the time you can believe what they say, but don't ever behave the way they act. Believe them when they teach truth, but don't be like them in the way they live it out privately." This then leads Jesus to the second part of his sermon.

#### 2. Recognize The Clues To A Counterfeit

Here is the mark of a counterfeit. They value human applause more than divine approval. That is why Jesus goes on to say to the crowd and his disciples, "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah" (Matthew 23:8-10).

### NOTES

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Calling Out

*Seeing Red | Week 2 | Matthew 23:1-13, 27-28*

Jesus was saying, “It is not what people call you on the outside that gives you value; it is what God knows you are on the inside that counts.” Remember this, a counterfeit wants you to follow them. The real deal wants you to follow Jesus. A counterfeit will want you to give your money to their greed. The real deal will want you to give your money to the gospel.

### **3. Recognize The Cure For A Counterfeit**

The cure for hypocrisy is humility. The humility to admit that you are a hypocrite and the humility to admit that hypocrisy lies within all of us and the humility to make sure that we always put others above ourselves and ourselves behind others. All Jesus is saying here to us is very simple. Just be the real deal. Jesus does not expect us to be perfect people. He expects His followers and believers to just be real.

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Calling Out

*Seeing Red | Week 2 | Matthew 23:1-13, 27-28*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is an example of a counterfeit being partially true?
2. Is there someone you know who you would describe as the real deal? What about them makes you think that?
3. What is one way you can practice humility this week and be real, rather than falling into the trap of hypocrisy?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Catching Up

*Seeing Red | Week 3 | Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 18:1-9*

### INTRODUCTION

### NOTES

If you ever go into a job interview, headhunters and personnel experts will tell you there is one question you will always be asked and you had better be prepared to answer correctly and it is this one, “How do you measure success?” On one occasion, the disciples came to Jesus, and they asked him this question, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’” (Matthew 18:1). The disciples thought the ultimate success would be to be chosen as the greatest in the kingdom. In fact, two of the disciples even asked if they could sit on either side of Jesus in the kingdom. The disciples were waiting with bated breath, but Jesus as he was very capable of doing, did something totally unexpected. He bypassed their question, and he did this. “He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them” (Matthew 18:2). He said to these twelve disciples, these battle-tested harden veterans who had been with him for three years and thought they had it all together and thought they were ready for primetime, “If you want to catch up to me, you’ve got to first catch up to them.”

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### KEY POINTS

#### **1. Accept The Spiritual Position Of A Child**

Often as adults we tell little kids they need to “grow up.” In essence we say to them, “You need to catch up to us.” Spiritually speaking, Jesus turns that around. To get into the kingdom of God, children don’t need to catch to adults, but adults need to catch up to children.

What is it about a child that makes it so important to become one to get into the kingdom of God? What Jesus is referring to is the one thing that every child comes into this world with (in fact they have no choice in a way) and that is trust. No one is more trusting than a little child. Even without being taught children learn to trust their parents, to believe what their parents say, to believe they are going to feed and clothe them and take care of them, to know they can always run to them whenever they are in trouble. That is exactly the kind of childlike faith that it takes to get into the kingdom of God. Spiritually speaking we are not born with that kind of faith and that is why Jesus said, “unless you change and become like little children.”

**Catching Up**

*Seeing Red | Week 3 | Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 18:1-9*

**2. Applaud The Spiritual Decision Of A Child**

You must keep in mind that even though Jesus extremely valued children, these children represent spiritual believers. People who realize that they are sinful, that they need a savior, that Jesus is that Savior, that He died on the cross and paid for their sins and they place their faith and trust in Him. Jesus is saying that when someone becomes like a little child and comes into the kingdom of God, when we welcome them, it is the same thing as welcoming Him.

Whenever anyone with that childlike faith goes from death to life, from darkness to light, from lost to being found, from being on the outside looking in, to the inside looking out, applaud, we need to celebrate and never get over the wonder of salvation. We need to welcome these child-like believers just like we would want to welcome Jesus Himself.

**3. Avoid The Spiritual Confusion Of A Child**

Now with all of this as a backdrop, you can understand why Jesus now makes one of the most frightening, bone-chilling statements of his ministry, “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!” (Matthew 18:6-7).

Jesus in his entire ministry never gave a plainer, or more powerful warning than this one. He is talking about believers and even people who would want to become believers. They may not come to Jesus ever or maybe they do, but they ran into sin or to believe false teaching or to spiritual doubt. I remind you nothing makes Jesus angrier than doing anything to either keep people from coming to Jesus or trying to lead people away from Jesus.

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Catching Up

*Seeing Red | Week 3 | Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 18:1-9*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What would you say are some characteristics of child-like faith?
2. Would you describe your own faith as child-like? Why or why not?
3. What is one thing you can learn from the children around you that will help you grow in your walk with Christ and learn to trust Him more?

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**Cutting In**

*Seeing Red | Week 4 | Mark 3:1-6*

**INTRODUCTION**

**NOTES**

In the third chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we see very clearly one of the things that gave Jesus heartburn, that made Jesus angry, and caused him to give his arch-enemies, the Pharisees that “look.” I particularly want those of us who are religious, church-going, heard about God, and dotting religious “i’s” and crossing religious “t’s” to listen very carefully to this story, because you are going to see a group of religious people that thought they were close to God and yet didn’t even know God. And then based on this story, I want to give you three practices to avoid that not only make Jesus angry but hurt his heart.

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**KEY POINTS**

**1. Don’t Prioritize Religion Over God**

God’s house is to be a place of rejuvenation. God’s word is to be a message of regeneration. This is also where a man with the withered hand was looking for help and hope and healing. However, that is not why the Pharisees were there. “Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath” (Mark 3:2).

These Pharisees were not there to find God. They were there to find fault. They couldn’t see God with a telescope, but they had Jesus under a microscope watching him closely. In the Greek language the word for “watching” indicates this is what they did all the time they were with Jesus. They were always looking for him to mess up, foul up, or make a mistake. That is exactly what Pharisees do. They prioritize religion over God.

**2. Don’t Prioritize Rules Over Goodness**

Jesus knows the Pharisees are watching His every move. So, He gets right to the point. “Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, ‘Stand up in front of everyone.’ Then Jesus asked them, ‘Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they remained silent” (Mark 3:3-4).

# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Cutting In

*Seeing Red* | Week 4 | Mark 3:1-6

Jesus knows exactly what He is doing. He asks the umpires for a ruling and wants to know what the rules are before He plays the game. The reason was these umpires had a bunch of made-up rules. The gospels record that Jesus actually healed on the Sabbath seven different times, but evidently it was breaking their rules. The problem was Jesus was more interested in doing good than following rules. And that's the same mentality we should have as well, not the mentality that the Pharisees had.

### 3. Don't Prioritize Rituals Over Grace

Jesus is asking them a question they either couldn't answer or wouldn't answer. In fact, I think they wouldn't answer it, because they knew they couldn't answer it. He knew deep down they already knew what the answer was, so get this picture. "He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored" (Mark 3:5).

Why does Jesus become angry with these religious leaders? It goes back to what God's house and God's day and God's Word and God Himself is all about. He is all about grace. He is all about restoring those who have fallen, repairing that which is broken, and refilling that which is empty. What is so sad is that these religious leaders didn't care about this withered hand because they had such withered hearts.

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Cutting In

*Seeing Red | Week 4 | Mark 3:1-6*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you ever fall into the trap of prioritizing religion over your relationship with God?
2. When was a time you or someone you know chose goodness over following the rules? What was the outcome of that situation?
3. Is there someone you need to show grace to that you've you may have had a pharisaical attitude towards in the past? What can you do to extend grace to that person this week?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Coming Back

Seeing Red | Week 5 | Matthew 25:31-46

### INTRODUCTION

What we are about to read is about an event that is coming that nobody likes to talk about, and a lot of people want to deny and that is the judgment of God. What you will see is that the passage isn't really about the judge, or the sentence, or evidence that the judge uses to determine which sentence is appropriate. Do you remember the last time you were walking through a parking lot and a car alarm goes off? It is annoying and it is irritating, but if you are like me do you know what you do about it? Nothing, you keep walking. Do you know why? We have heard so many car alarms go off that now car alarms have lost their purpose. We don't pay attention anymore. Think about what we are about to read as an alarm. You had best not ignore it, because we are all in this story. It reveals what is coming to us when life is over. There are facts we should face and be ready for what faces us.

### KEY POINTS

#### 1. We Should Envision A Spiritual Separation

"Separate" is such a sad word. It is one thing to separate a mother from her daughter, or a father from a son, or a husband from a wife. It is another thing to separate people for eternity especially when one group is going to be with God forever and the other group is not. Jesus tells us about two categories of people that He will separate from each other one day: the sheep and the goats.

This would have been a very familiar picture if you lived in that day, because shepherds usually had mixed flocks. The shepherd had sheep and the shepherd had goats, but where the sheep preferred the open air and could be left in a pasture at night, goats were more susceptible to the cold. They had to be kept warm and so they needed shelter. The shepherd cared for the goats, but he had a special love for the sheep, because that is what makes the shepherd the shepherd. Sheep follow the shepherd. Goats are very stubborn.

This is where we need to pay attention. The shepherd knows those who belong to him as sheep. The shepherd knows those who reject him as the goats and all of us will be in one category or the other. It will depend on our relationship to the shepherd. But you can be sure that one day there will be a spiritual separation.

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## Coming Back

Seeing Red | Week 5 | Matthew 25:31-46

### 2. We Will Experience A Personal Evaluation

Jesus says the evidence that sheep actually follow the shepherd is because the sheep loves who the shepherd loves and cares about who the shepherd cares about. There are six things: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, hospitality to the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and visiting those in prison. Notice the basis for his selection was not church membership, religion, tithing, Bible memory or even baptism. Everything they had been taught (particularly by the legalistic Pharisees) had just gone out the window.

What is the sign of a sheep? How do you know someone truly is following the shepherd named Jesus? It is not your seminary degrees, your church attendance or your theological knowledge. No, the sign of the saved is their love for the least.

### 3. We Can Expect An Eternal Destination

we are all headed for one of two destinations. One is a place where we will be with God forever. One will be a place where we won't. One is called heaven and the other is called hell. Hell is a total separation not just the sheep from the goats, but it is a separation from God. "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me...'"(Matthew 25:41).

The real separation comes in the final destination. We may separate men from women, rich and poor, wise and foolish, rulers and subjects, haves and have nots. The only division that really matters is between those who go away to eternal punishment and those enter eternal life.

A righteous Holy God requires him to hold humans responsible for the life that they live and the consequences of their actions. What we do or don't do matters more than just eating and sleeping and dying. What we do here determines where we will spend eternity. What we do for God in this life determines what God will do with you in the next one. As the great preacher/pastor John Stott put it, "Our eternal destiny is settled in life, sealed at death and stated on the day of judgement."

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Coming Back

*Seeing Red | Week 5 | Matthew 25:31-46*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. If Jesus came back today, would you be ready?
2. Are you confident that you would be grouped among the sheep when the time of spiritual separation and personal evaluation comes?
3. When is the last time you showed love to the least of these? Is there a way you can show that kind of love to someone this week?

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