

# the Christian atheist

## The Christian Atheist

You say you believe in God. Do you really? Do you live your life as if God is in the room, or do you assume He's not paying attention? You call yourself a Christian. Are you who you say you are?

In this multiple week series, we will challenge each other to confront hypocrisy, challenge ourselves, and live a life that brings glory to Christ.

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## The Christian Atheist – Week 6

### *Believing in God, But You Won't Forgive*

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### Introduction

For the last several weeks, we've explored areas where many people say they believe in God, but struggle to fully trust Him in everyday life.

We've talked about:

- Believing God loves you
- Believing God can redeem your past
- Believing God hears your prayers
- Believing God is still good when life feels unfair

Up until now, these messages have centered on **God's relationship with us**.

But today, the focus shifts.

Today is about **our relationship with others**.

**The question:**

What happens when we believe in God... but refuse to forgive?

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# 1. The Danger of Unforgiveness

## Big Idea: Unforgiveness Creates Roots

### Hebrews 12:14–16 (NKJV)

- Bitterness never stays buried.
- What starts in the heart eventually affects every area of life.
- Roots spread underground long before fruit appears above ground.

### Key Truth:

Unforgiveness can destroy:

- Relationships
- Friendships
- Marriages
- Ministries
- Families

### Illustration:

Like the Bitterroot flower, some roots can appear dead... but under the right conditions, they live again.

If bitterness is left unchecked, it always grows back.

### Application:

Don't allow old wounds to become living roots.

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# 2. Bitterness vs. Christlike Forgiveness

## Big Idea: Bitterness Becomes Bondage

### Ephesians 4:29–32 (NKJV)

### Colossians 3:13 (NKJV)

- Forgiveness is not based on what someone deserves.
- Forgiveness is based on what Christ has done for us.

## **Key Truth:**

Bitterness says:

“They owe me.”

Grace says:

“Christ paid my debt.”

## **Biblical Example:**

When Ananias laid hands on Saul of Tarsus, he chose obedience over bitterness.

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# **3. Forgiveness Is Not Optional**

## **Big Idea: Forgiveness Is Obedience**

### **Matthew 6:14–15 (NLT)**

Jesus doesn't present forgiveness as advice.

Jesus presents forgiveness as obedience.

### **Key Question:**

Will someone else's wrongdoing become my wrongdoing?

### **Key Truth:**

When we refuse forgiveness, we allow the offense to keep controlling us.

Forgiveness blocks the enemy's attack before bitterness takes root.

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# **4. When Forgiveness Feels Impossible**

## **Big Idea: Forgiveness Begins Where Your Strength Ends**

### **2 Corinthians 12:9 (NKJV)**

God's strength is revealed in our weakness.

### **Key Truth:**

You may not feel strong enough to forgive...

...but God never asked you to forgive in your own strength.

## **Supporting Scripture:**

### **Philippians 4:13**

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

This includes forgiveness.

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## **5. Pray for Those Who Hurt You**

### **Big Idea: Prayer Softens the Heart**

**Luke 6:27–28**

**Matthew 5:43–44**

Jesus commands us to:

- Love our enemies
- Bless those who curse us
- Pray for those who hurt us

### **Key Truth:**

Prayer may not immediately change them...

...but prayer always changes us.

### **Quote:**

Pastor Craig Groeschel says:

“My prayers for others may or may not change them. But my prayers always change me.”

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## **6. The Parable of Unforgiveness**

### **Big Idea: Limiting Forgiveness Isn't Forgiveness**

**Matthew 18:21–35**

Peter asked:

“How many times should I forgive?”

Jesus answered:

“Seventy times seven.”

### **Key Truth:**

Those who have received much grace should extend much grace.

Don't place limits on the forgiveness you give when God has not placed limits on the forgiveness He offers.

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## **7. Let Go of Revenge**

### **Big Idea: Freedom Comes When You Release What They Owe You**

#### **Romans 12:17–19**

Unforgiveness often disguises itself as justice.

### **Key Truth:**

Forgiveness is trusting God with justice.

God says:

“Vengeance is Mine.”

### **Supporting Scripture:**

#### **1 Timothy 6:11–12**

Fight the good fight of faith.

Not with revenge.

Not with bitterness.

But with:

- Faith
  - Prayer
  - Love
  - Gentleness
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## **Closing Challenge**

### **Final Thought**

“Unforgiveness doesn’t punish the person who hurt you nearly as much as it poisons the person holding onto it.”

“Forgiveness is not saying what happened was okay—it’s choosing freedom over bitterness.”

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## **Response / Next Steps**

### **This Week’s Challenge**

- ✓ Pray for someone who hurt you
  - ✓ Release the need for an apology
  - ✓ Trust God with justice
  - ✓ Choose freedom over bitterness
  - ✓ Fight the good fight of faith
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