

HOTHEADS

#HOTHEADSERIES



HOTHEADS, PART 3: DISSOLVING ANGER

We all hold a scorecard. It's where we've scribbled down who has hurt us and what they have done to us. This scorecard shapes and influences the way we see the world, how we view ourselves, and sometimes, our perspective of God himself. Everything is framed by these mental notes. Each tally mark has us seething with anger. We want people to pay. We hope others understand the pain they've caused. We desire to produce some form of justice that either gets us what we want or punishes the one who kept us from getting it.

BIG IDEA: Leftover anger spoils life and sours relationships. Forgiveness dissolves anger.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What relationships or situations are you still holding your scorecard for?
2. What was one of the worst things you did as a child that you asked forgiveness for? What did you learn from your experience?
3. Is the idea of forgiveness difficult for you to understand? What part of it doesn't add up? Do you have an easier time receiving it, or giving it? Why do you think that is?
4. One of the verses we have looked at every week is *Ephesians 4:26*.

And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.
Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT)

Just as drinking leftover, out-of-date milk can poison us, anger is the same way. You and I were designed to carry anger for only just a few hours—until the sun goes down. When we allow anger to carry over and be leftover for over a day, it can turn toxic and ruin everything else. All because someone didn't deal with anger leftovers. Chris said, "*Leftover anger spoils life and sours relationships.*" How have you seen relationships get spoiled and soured by the inability to deal with anger?

5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Hebrews 12:15.*

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and to defile many.
Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)

6. How is bitterness like a root? What are some similarities with bitterness and roots of weeds?

Did you ever put white flowers into ink and watch their color change as the ink was absorbed up the stems and taken into the flowers themselves? Bitterness produces a poisonous fruit. As we store bitterness and hatred inside us, our lives start to reflect hatred, anger and rage. Our relationships are poisoned. It is hard to admit to being a bitter person so we find reasons (or excuses) to justify our feelings. Here are five qualities of a bitter person:

- *Tend to justify their bitterness – I deserve to be angry after what they did to me.*
- *Overly critical – You pick apart the person you are angry with.*
- *Secretly celebrate the misfortunes of others.*
- *Tend to write off entire groups of people – Hurt by one or two, but mistrust the whole group.*
- *Struggle to see the bitterness in themselves – Everyone else sees your bitterness but you don't.*

7. Do you identify with any of these qualities? Which of them do you struggle with the most? Why do you think that's so?
8. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Ephesians 4:31-32.*

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)

9. How is forgiveness the key to getting rid of bitterness? What keeps us from forgiving others?
10. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 18:21-35.* Why is it so difficult to forgive those who have severely hurt us? What keeps you from practicing forgiveness?
11. How have you seen unforgiveness and bitterness hurt you?
12. When you think about the people you need to forgive, who comes to mind? What is keeping you from forgiving this person?

Forgiving someone doesn't mean that you condone them. It doesn't mean that you excuse what they did. It doesn't even mean that you have reconciled with them. Forgiveness is the act of letting go of your right to hurt back someone who has hurt you. We should forgive others because God has forgiven us. We have accumulated a mountain of moral debt to Him, but because of His gracious heart, God sent His son Jesus to die on the cross so that we might experience His forgiveness.

13. What's the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?
14. What about forgetting? Is it possible to forgive and forget? Is forgiveness dependent upon forgetting? If you can't forget, then what should we do to allow forgiveness to reign?
15. What can the forgiveness we have received from God teach us about forgiving those who hurt us?
16. How does it change your perspective when you focus on how God has forgiven you? Why is forgiveness the only antidote for our anger?
17. How is our ability to accept God's forgiveness tied to our willingness and ability to forgive others?

MOVING FORWARD

Until we figure out what to do with the scorecard, we'll continue to let anger reign. What we have to understand is that forgiveness and reconciliation are two different things. Reconciliation might not be an option, but forgiveness is always available. The love of God is the only thing powerful enough to loosen our grip on our scorecard. Forgiveness is the antidote to our anger. The rise of anger awakens our desperate need for God's perspective and grace. Our anger is dissolved in the grace of our God.

Because forgiveness is such a fundamental part of our relationship with Christ, the Bible has much to say about the dangers of bitterness and the delivering power of forgiveness. So how are things with your heart? Are you mad at anyone? An important part of getting rid of bitterness is to identify who you are bitter towards.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

If there is someone in your life who you need to forgive, take the next steps toward forgiving that person this week. Follow the Biblical principles that Pastor Chris discussed in his message on how to forgive others by first praying for that person and then forgiving that person in the same way God forgave you.

If you've been hurt by someone in the past, make a list of the wrongs done to you and what you feel they owe you. Recognize that Christ died for this person's sins against you and extend to them the forgiveness that you have received from God. Write on the list, "Paid in Full" and then pick a day to put it behind you—bury it, burn it, or whatever will bring closure. You will be tempted to mentally dig it up again, but don't. Remind yourself that it is in your past. Whenever this past incident comes to mind, agree with God that this sin has been paid for by Christ and that you, too, have forgiven them.

WEEKLY READING

This week, spend some time reading and reflecting on Hebrews 12:15, Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 18:21-35, Mark 11:25, Ephesians 4:26-32, Romans 12:17-21,

