




# GUILT AND ANGER

# 7 SESSION

*"If only I had insisted he stay home."  
"I knew I should have taken her to a different doctor."  
"Why didn't I tell him, 'I'm sorry'?"*

Regret, guilt, and anger are three emotions that can create barriers against the peace and healing God has for you. If you're facing these obstacles or others, Session 7 will help you to overcome them.

By viewing the video, being part of the small group discussion, and completing the **FROM MOURNING TO JOY** exercises, you'll learn how to:

-  Deal with false guilt
-  Grieve conflicted relationships
-  Handle grief-related anger

## VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you have while viewing the video.

## SOURCES OF FALSE GUILT

What ifs

## AVOIDING FALSE GUILT

Was it your fault?

*"God knows the exact time we will die. There's nothing you can do to extend your lifespan one-tenth of a second." -Zig Ziglar*

God has numbered our days (Psalm 139:16)

It's okay to heal

Phoebe's story

## TRUE GUILT

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Unresolved conflict

Seek forgiveness

## ANGER & GRIEF

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A painful combination

Forgive (Ephesians 4:32, Romans 12:19)

"The only way we can [forgive] people is by remembering Christ has forgiven us." –Elyse Fitzpatrick

## Blaming God

Is it okay to be angry at God?

Keep talking to God

### **In this week's From Mourning to Joy exercises ...**

Joanne experienced great anger, unforgiveness, and guilt after her son's death. This week's exercises will give you tools to deal with these tough emotions.

"Anger at God is fueled by a sense of entitlement." --Phil Sasser



# WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?

Forgiveness makes more sense when, instead of focusing on the wrong done to you, you think about God's character and the manner in which He forgave you. Here's a story that Jesus told to encourage you to forgive.

## AN ABUNDANCE OF FORGIVENESS

"Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

"But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

## AN ABSENCE OF MERCY

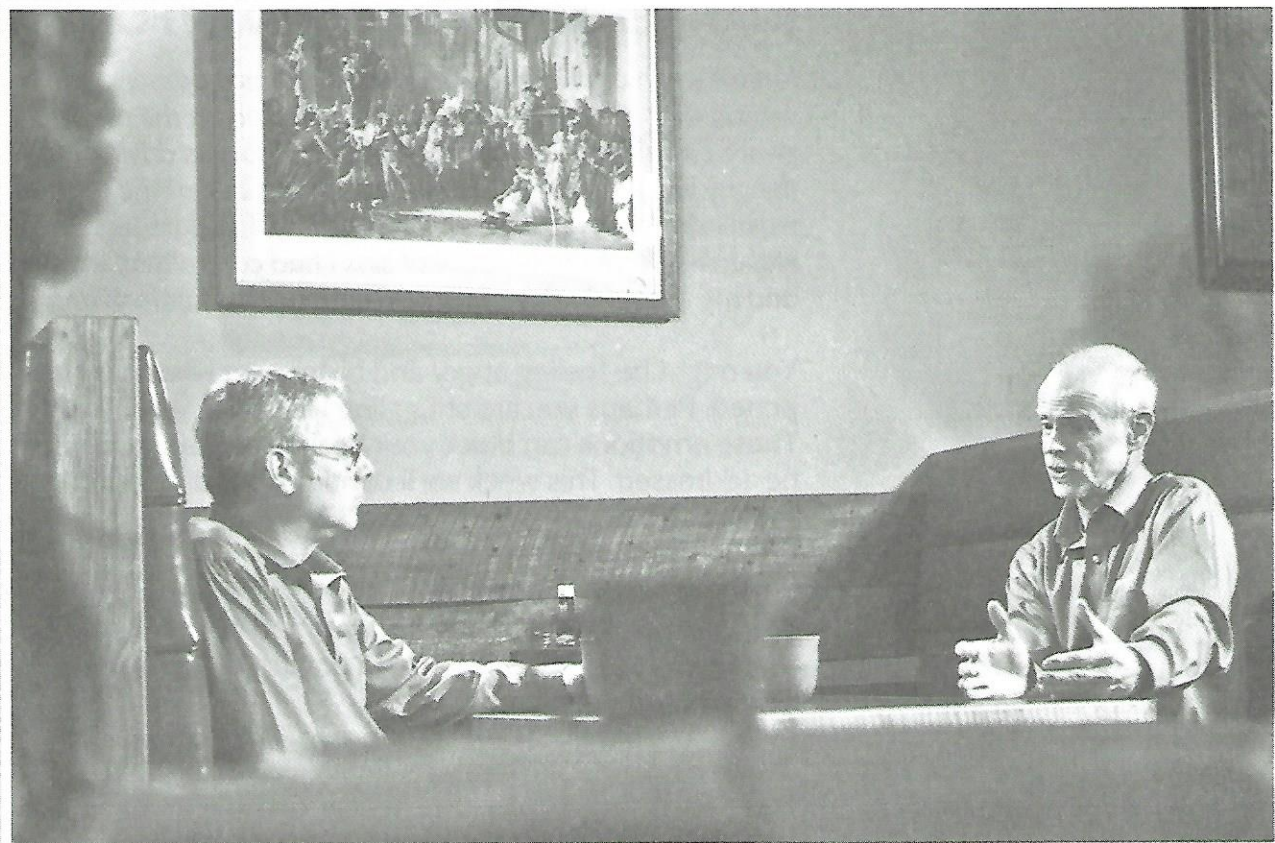
"But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

## AN AROUSAL OF ANGER

"When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.







“That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.” (Matthew 18:23–35 NLT)

Lorraine Peterson explains, “God is perfect and He forgave me. Who am I to say, ‘I’m not going to forgive that other person; he doesn’t deserve it.’ I didn’t deserve to be forgiven by God. That person gets my forgiveness whether or not he deserves it.”

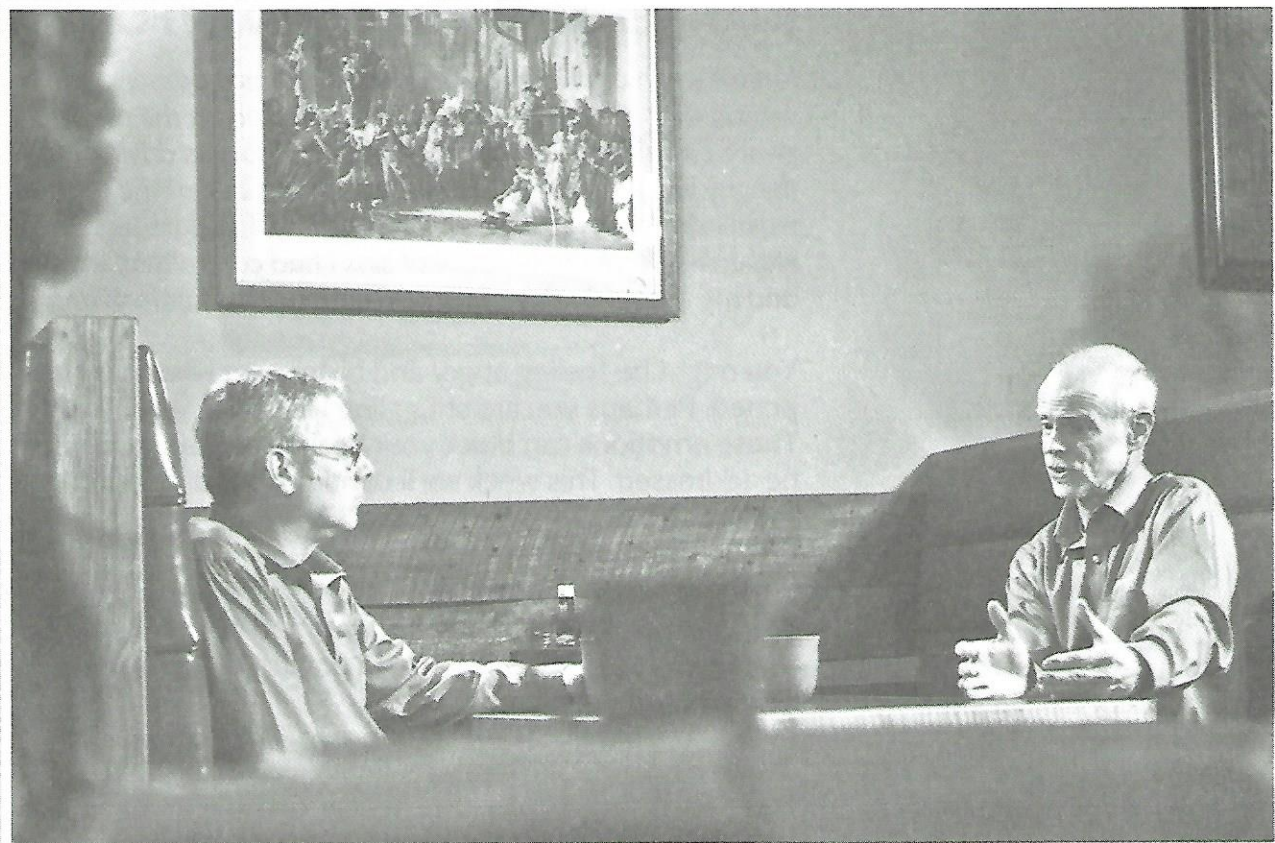
### **AN ABSENCE OF JUSTICE?**

Sorting out the emotions of grief is complicated. It’s complicated even further when your loved one’s death occurred because of someone’s

negligence or violence. If that’s your situation, know that God cares for you and invites you to find comfort in Him and in the fact that one day He’ll put an end to all suffering and punish all injustice. But in the midst of your pain and confusion, remember that it’s very important for you to forgive. Jesus says, “But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:15). We forgive because we’ve been forgiven.

To learn more about how to experience God’s forgiveness, see the article in the front of your workbook entitled “God, What Is Going On?”





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# FROM MOURNING TO JOY

## ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

### Session Seven - Guilt and Anger



#### JOANNE: "I SWORE I'D NEVER FORGIVE"

*Joanne's son died in a car accident. He was a passenger in a vehicle that hit a weed-sprayer truck parked on the roadside. "I swore I would never forgive the person who was driving the car or the guy who had the weed-sprayer on the side of the road who wasn't doing his job according to the law. I also believed my son was taken from me because of sins I had committed, my actions, and my lack of faith in God. I was angry. I was unforgiving."*

You might be feeling angry and bitter over what has happened. Perhaps you are struggling with guilt, with "If onlys." These emotions can block your healing process and need to be addressed. This week we'll continue our discussion on how to take care of difficult emotions.

#### DAY 1

#### Feelings of guilt

"If only ... What if ..." These thoughts can plague a person in grief. How do you get rid of them?

3. Write your thoughts and questions about Psalm 139:16 in a prayer to God below.

#### GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

*"You [God] saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."*  
(Psalm 139:16 NLT)

1. What struggles do you have with "If onlys" and feelings of guilt about your actions/decisions surrounding your loved one's death?
2. According to Psalm 139:16, when was it decided how many days you and your loved one would live?

#### CONSIDER THIS

*"Psalm 139:16 clearly states that our life every day is measured, meaning simply—God knows the exact time that we will die. He knows when He's going to call us home. There's nothing you can do to extend your life span [or someone else's] one-tenth of a second."*

—Zig Ziglar

#### TALKING TO GOD

God, I give my feelings of guilt, my "If onlys," to You. I lay them at Your feet because they are too heavy a burden to carry. It was my loved one's time to go. Please comfort me in my pain.

*"We make the best decisions we can at the time, and sometimes the outcomes are not good." —Bryan*

**DAY  
2**

**Desiring justice, or revenge?**

What do you think the Bible says about justice and revenge when someone has sinned against you or your loved one?

**GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU**

*"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."* (Romans 12:19)

*"God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you."* (2 Thessalonians 1:6)

1. Perhaps you have desired revenge or payback from someone who has wronged you. What has God promised you in Romans 12:19 and 2 Thessalonians 1:6?
2. Our attempts at taking revenge never ultimately satisfy. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:6, how do you know that God will not let a wrong go unpunished?
3. Instead of occupying your time with blame or revenge, what could you do with your time that would honor your lost loved one and honor God?

**CONSIDER THIS**

*"God has committed Himself to exact justice on this person at a level that's far more thorough than a human criminal justice system."* –Susan Lutz

*"It is mine to avenge; I will repay." –God (Romans 12:19)*

**TALKING TO GOD**

God, sometimes my blame and anger fuel me, and I keep fanning the flames in my mind. I don't want to continue to live in this nightmarish place of vengeance—and I don't have to. Right now, I surrender it to You. Help me to trust You to bring about justice.

**DAY  
3**

**What does it mean to forgive?**

Forgive? No way. Forgiveness can seem impossible, but it is a crucial part of healing. Refusing to forgive blocks your healing and shapes you into a person you don't want to be.

**GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU**

*"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* (Colossians 3:13b)

*"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."* (Matthew 6:14–15)

1. Whom do you struggle to forgive, and why?
2. According to Colossians 3:13b, how are we to forgive?
3. When does God withhold forgiveness from you (see Matthew 6:14–15)?



## CONSIDER THIS

What the Bible teaches about forgiveness:

- Forgiveness doesn't mean you condone what the person did or that you trust the person.
- Forgiveness is about getting your heart right with God. It is foremost about your relationship with God.
- It frees you from a lifetime of bondage to a bitter and hardened heart.
- Forgiveness isn't a one-time act. You'll have to continue to choose forgiveness.
- We forgive because God has forgiven us.
- Forgiveness doesn't mean you're letting the other person off the hook. It's entrusting God to take care of the situation for you.
- Forgiveness isn't reconciliation. Reconciliation requires genuine repentance on the part of the person who was wrong.

If you want to forgive, don't focus on what's been done to you. Focus on what you've done to God and the fact that He's forgiven you (see this week's Day 5 and the article on page 66).

## TALKING TO GOD

God, I can't do this on my own. Forgiveness seems impossible, but I want to do it. I don't want to turn into a bitter, unloving person. Help me to understand just how much You've forgiven me.

**DAY**  
**4**

### Anger with God

Maybe you're not angry with another person, but with God.

## GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

Job was a man faithful to God who experienced great loss and suffering. At one point he questioned and complained to God. The book of Job explains what happened next ...

*"Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm: 'Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?'" (Job 40:6-8)*

1. Rate your level of anger with God (1 being not angry, 10 being extremely angry):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Is your anger causing you to (check the following that apply):

- Not want to pray
- Not want to go to church
- Not want to read your Bible
- Reject the goodness of God
- Close your ears to His voice

3. It's right for us to think of God as loving and patient. But Job 40:6-8 shows us that God also demands reverence and respect. How have you shown God that you respect and revere Him as you've processed your grief emotions? How could you improve in this area?

## CONSIDER THIS

Anger with God is always the result of a conclusion that a perfect God has treated you unjustly. But we don't have the right to judge God. Thankfully, He understands your pain and frustration.

Take your heartfelt anger and pain to the Lord, while holding on to the truths you know about Him. He is trustworthy and faithful; He has not wronged you. He loves you, and He proved it at the cross.

Read more about how God proved His love for you on page xii.

*"I had so much anger built up in me." —Joanne*

## TALKING TO GOD

God, I've been accusing You of things I know nothing about. You are God, and Your good plan and Your perfect ways are beyond my comprehension. Someday I might understand, but for now, help me trust You.

**DAY  
5**

### You can be forgiven

Maybe you struggle because you behaved or treated someone wrongly, whether before or since the death, and you feel badly about it. And if it was toward your loved one, you wonder what can even be done about it?

God offers you a place of rest and forgiveness.

### GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

*"He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west."* (Psalm 103:12 NLT)

*"If you, LORD, kept a record of sins ... who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness."* (Psalm 130:3-4a)

1. If you've confessed your sins to Christ and have believed in what He's done for you, how far away are your sins from you (see Psalm 103:12)?
2. How thorough is God's forgiveness (see Psalm 103:12)?
3. According to Psalm 130:3-4a, who needs forgiveness?

4. If you truly believe the truths of today's Bible verses, in addition to feeling sorrow over sin what other emotions do you feel as you contemplate your forgiveness?

## CONSIDER THIS

*"If you say, 'I know that God forgives me, but I can't forgive myself,' you're underestimating what it cost God to forgive you. You're removing yourself from the greatest blessing of life and you are saying, 'My standards are more important.'" –Susan Lutz*

## TALKING TO GOD

God, it's so hard not to keep condemning myself, but I choose instead to receive Your forgiveness and to trust that Your forgiveness is perfect and complete. I can rest in that forgiveness and not try to place my own standards above Yours.

## JOANNE: LOOKING BACK

*"After I came to the Lord, I realized, 'If He could forgive, then surely I could forgive.' It took a long time, but I realized I needed to do that. I also realized that Kyle didn't die because of my sins, and I started to feel a lot of that guilt being relieved. Forgiving has relieved a very heavy load off my shoulders. Every human is not perfect. I'm not perfect. I realized that could have been me driving that truck. Forgiveness is definitely a process."*

## NEXT SESSION

Learn how to deal with problems that are complicating your grief.



# MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK

## Session - Seven

### PERSONAL CHECKUP - TRACK YOUR HEALING PROGRESS

Place a check in the box identifying how you're feeling. Insert words to explain why.

	REALLY BAD	OKAY	PRETTY GOOD	GREAT
EMOTIONALLY				
PHYSICALLY				
SPIRITUALLY				
RELATIONALLY				

### JOURNAL TOPICS - MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

Choose one or more ideas below, or choose your own topic. We encourage you to use a separate notebook for your weekly journaling.

- Write a prayer to God explaining why you don't want to forgive someone and asking for His help. Describe how unforgiveness is harming you and those around you.
- What concerns do you have about unfinished business between you and your loved one? Bring these concerns to God.

### MOVING FORWARD - PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING HOW TO DEAL WITH GUILT

Completing the chart on the next page will help you face and evaluate feelings of guilt over past actions/decisions in order to meet the present and future with freedom and assurance.

**Column 1:** Describe a past experience you feel guilty about.

**Column 2:** Describe your inner and outer response to your guilt.

**Column 3:** Find out what God's Word says about it. (*Consider truths you've learned so far in GriefShare. Ask your GriefShare leader, church leaders, or Christian friends to direct you to applicable biblical truths.*)

**Column 4:** Record what you'll do next as a result of what you've learned, in order to bring about change.



### My Responses to Guilt

I FEEL GUILTY ABOUT	HOW I'VE RESPONDED	WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS	WHAT I'LL DO THE NEXT TIME I FEEL GUILTY

**“GOD CAN BOTH FORGIVE YOU AND COMFORT YOU.” –BRAD HAMBRICK**