



# Anger

## *When It All Seems So Unfair*

*Why is this happening to me, God? I just want my life to go back to the way it was. I don't deserve this.*

Anger is a common part of grief, but God understands. He wants you to come to Him with your anger and questions. His arms are open to receive you, and He wants to give you a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Learning how to process your anger in a healthy way is important. This week's video and Step by Step exercises will help you do that. You'll learn:

- **Anger can give you energy to make needed changes.**
- **Anger is powerful, but God can help you manage it.**
- **Forgiveness is important for you & your relationships.**



# Video outline

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

## Addressing anger

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Toward the one who died

Toward other people

- Questions about a doctor's decision
- Forgiveness

Toward God

# Step by Step

Daily comfort & encouragement



## Reese's story

"I was extremely angry at the person who introduced the drugs into my world. I blamed him for the ultimate death of my son, because if my wife hadn't met him, she wouldn't have gone the direction she had. Reese wouldn't have had the issues he had. I was extremely angry at that person. I got to a point where it was destroying my life. I was so consumed with hatred towards this guy, it turned me ugly. I didn't have any joy in my life."

*Anger is a complicated emotion. When channeled in the right way, it can be the fuel that's needed to make a healthy change. But when it gets out of control, it's like the bull in the china shop that destroys everything around it. This week's exercises will help you work through feelings of anger and show you why forgiveness is vital for your healing.*

## 1 Go to God with your anger



**A**nger is a common response in grief. You are suddenly face-to-face with the knowledge that life can be unfair and people can be unjust or insensitive. But please be careful, because anger is powerful and can be destructive. To prevent problems with your anger, God wants you to bring your frustrations, anxiety, and questions to Him—like the psalmists did in the Bible:

"How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?" (Psalm 13:2a)

"My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest." (Psalm 22:2)

The psalmists were honest about how they felt, and they knew the best person to hear their concerns was the One who is powerful enough to help. So, they followed their complaints with reflections (reminders) about God's character:

"But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me." (Psalm 22:19)

“Look on me and answer, LORD my God. ... I trust in your unfailing love.” (Psalm 13:3a, 5a)

This may not be easy. It might need to be done numerous times. But taking your grief and anger to the Lord can actually draw you closer to Him, and over time, comfort you as you experience His compassion and mercy.

## 2 Blame and seeking justice

If your loved one's death was due to a crime or someone's negligence, acknowledging that person's responsibility is part of your healing process. And seeking justice in human courts to prevent others from being hurt or to protect the memory of your loved one is an option to consider.

But, if your desire is to dispense hurt or get payback, it's important to release that into God's hands, and also to trust God with the outcomes of any legal matters. Otherwise, bitterness and vengeful thoughts can keep you from processing your grief well.

### God's message to you

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. ... 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 12:17a, 19)

“The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.” (Psalm 145:17)

1. **How much time and energy do you spend assessing blame? How is that affecting your grief recovery?**
2. **Ben and John have both lost loved ones to the negligence of others. Ben fully trusts God to deliver justice. John does not. How might their experiences of grief differ?**

### Remember

- If this is a situation where it's important to seek justice, consider what steps you could take.
- Even if you're not satisfied with the results of the justice system, trust that God will ultimately administer justice.

# 3

## Overcoming bitterness

Maybe you've struggled with bitterness (resentment), which is a type of anger. Pastor Doug Schmidt warns us to be careful about this emotion: "Bitterness festers within us. It gets projected onto people who care about us." But be reassured that with God's grace, you can turn around (or avoid) the negative effects of bitterness.

### God's message to you

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"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone. ... See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." (Hebrews 12:14a-15)

1. **Describe any bitterness or resentment you've felt during grief. How have you dealt with these feelings?**
2. **God gives grace to His people, enabling (and strengthening) them to live a life pleasing to Him. With God's grace to overcome bitterness, how would your life be different?**
3. **Sherry still feels bitter about the circumstances surrounding her loved one's death. If she doesn't overcome this bitterness, how might it affect her relationships?**

### Remember

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- If bitterness has taken root, it will poison relationships touched by it.
- A clear understanding of God's grace—His undeserved favor and strengthening—will uproot feelings of bitterness.

## 4

## How to change your perspective



**N**ancy lost both her parents to cancer within a month. “I was angry that they both died so close. I was angry that I had to take care of both of them at the same time. I was angry that they died. But I knew God was my hope, so I still wanted to read His Word. I continued to do the things I knew would keep me close to God, even when I was angry.”

Nancy admits this wasn't easy. “I felt there was an absence of joy,” she says, “but I knew that didn't mean God had left. My hope in going through the grief process was that God was not going to leave me. I knew He was going to be there to get me through it. I would read His Word, then write to Him about how it made me feel. Many times, He would speak back to me through another Scripture [Bible verse]. Other times, I would close the Word and think, ‘I don't feel better.’ But, I knew that as time passed God would do the healing—that was the hope I held on to—and He did.”

Despite her anger, Nancy was able to use biblical principles to shape her perspective of her circumstances. Seeing your situation in light of what the Bible says about it is a necessary part of grieving with hope—and not becoming stuck in negative thinking patterns. Like Nancy, you can turn to God's Word for help with this. Use these steps to start changing your perspective:

1. Read God's Word. Reread the Bible verses cited in this session.
2. Personalize God's Word. Write down which verses mean the most to you and why.
3. Apply God's Word. Ask God how this truth can be applied in your life. Then write out a plan for how you will implement it.



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## Healing through *Writing*

### A self check-in

If you find yourself struggling with being irritable, easily frustrated, and quick to snap at people, then use your weekly journal to evaluate what's going on. Here are some prompts to get you started:

- **Bring your frustrations and questions to God by writing them down. Then look at the character traits of God you've learned this week. Knowing these traits, how do you think God will respond to your concerns?**
- **What frustration with your loved one are you struggling with? If you could, what would you say about this to him or her?**
- **Are you struggling to forgive someone associated with the death of your loved one? Describe how this is affecting your life.**



## Chart your progress

Place a check in the boxes to identify how you are feeling this week: emotionally, physically, etc.  
Or, even better, insert a word to describe how you are doing.

	BAD	OKAY	GOOD	GREAT
<b>Emotionally</b>				
<b>Physically</b>				
<b>Spiritually</b>				
<b>Relationally</b>				
<b>How your life is in general</b>				

## My Healing

### Reese's story

"For a long time, if I heard his name, I would start getting mad, and I'd just have to go to God and say, 'God, please get this out of me. I thought I'd forgiven him. You know I want to forgive him.' I think God, in His very loving and gracious way, takes that hatred away from me. I finally forgave the man in my heart. I asked God to forgive me for even having those kinds of thoughts about this gentleman, knowing that I've done pretty horrible things too."

#### Next session

Learn how to deal with the "if onlys."

## Why Should I Forgive?

**A**nger and bitterness can complicate your grieving process if they're not handled properly. To manage these emotions, forgiveness is key. Unfortunately, when a clear wrong has been committed, anger and bitterness may seem to make more sense than forgiveness.

How can you shift your thinking? Forgiveness makes more sense when you move your focus away from the wrongdoing and onto God's character and how much He has forgiven you. Here's a story Jesus told to explain how to do this and 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)

Christian author 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.