

SESSION 6: LETTING GO OF ANGER AND BLAME

How is anger, blame and/or regret affecting your life? What would life be like without it?



SHARE A PRAYER

Open the session with prayer requests and a prayer.

INTRODUCTIONS

Last week's homework asked you to imagine if you were sitting with Jesus or the object of your loss, what you would want to hear, and what they would wish for you.

- **Does anyone want to share what they learned from that reflection? Did anything surprise you?**

BEHIND THE SCENES

As Brooks fiercely punches the bag in this scene, memories of his past flood forward. He punches, and he hears his former sergeant say, "*You'd better check your anger.*" He punches harder and sees Glen Ake's gun pointed at him. There is no escaping his memories or the anger associated with them.

He's angry at the men who stole his life and took his parents. He's angry at himself for opening the door that night. He blames Ake and Hatch for all the damage done. He blames himself for not being able to stop them. The cycle was unbreakable. Whenever his mind had time to wander—especially in the years immediately after—it went back to blame, regret, and anger.

As you watch this clip, think about any blame, anger, or regrets you may be harboring around your loss. What are your flashbacks about?

MOVIE CLIP - Play Session 6: Letting Go of Anger and Blame

THINK-PAIR-SHARE QUESTIONS

Before discussing these questions as a group, take a minute to write your own responses (think), discuss them with a partner (pair) then join together for a group discussion (share).

- 1) What is the correlation between all the flashbacks in this scene? (*There isn't necessarily only one right answer—it's subjective*)
- 2) In what ways do you think Brooks' anger was affecting the rest of his life? Think about other examples from *The Amendment* (e.g., his relationship with his wife and sister, his work life, and finances)
- 3) Can you relate to feeling this kind of anger, regret, and/or blame? If yes, how so? If not, how have you dealt with anger, regret, and/or blame in the past?

FAITH WALK

Among the disciples, Simon Peter was the one most known for his quick temper and impulsive decisions. Peter was passionate in everything he did—he was the disciple to pull his sword and cut off a soldier's ear the night Jesus was taken into custody from the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:10-11). He was the only one to walk on the water toward Jesus (Matthew 14:25-32), one of the few to witness Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13), and the one to boldly declare Christ was "the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:13-20) then regretfully deny him three times in Jesus' last hours (Matthew 26:69-75). Peter was a courageous warrior for Christ, but also lived with times of anger, regret, and blame.

During Jesus' Last Supper with the disciples, He took Peter aside and said,

"Simon... Satan has tried his best to separate all of you from me, like chaff from wheat. Simon, I've prayed for you in particular that you not give in or give out. When you have come through the time of testing, turn to your companions and give them a fresh start."

—Luke 22:31-32 (*The Message* translation)

- What is Jesus warning Peter about in these verses?

- **How might anger add to separation from others and from God?**
- **How is Jesus trying to help Peter from this threat of separation?**

Chaff is the dry, scaly protective casing around wheat. It's necessary for protecting the wheat, but has no value after the harvest. Similarly, anger, and even blame, can serve a protective role at times, but cannot go on indefinitely. The true value is what lies beneath the anger—possibly the hurt and/or the joy that can't emerge while anger and blame dominate.

Jesus compassionately prayed that Peter not give in or give out to other dominating influences—that he be free of Satan's grip and gain a level-headed perspective necessary for strengthening his brothers and preparing for the challenges ahead.

Peter's greatest regret followed his conversation with Jesus in Luke 22:31-32. In the following verse Peter declared:

"Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

Jesus answered, *"I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."*
- Luke 22:33-34

As we know from Luke 22:54-62 and Matthew 26:69-75, Peter did deny Jesus. When three different people asked him if he was with Jesus, he "swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'" Both Luke and Matthew end the recount with the same phrase summary: "And he went outside and wept bitterly."

Peter's anger had now turned inward. He hated himself for his weak decisions and denial.

- **What does Jesus call Peter in Luke 22:31-32? And what does he call him in Luke 22:33-34?**
- **Interestingly, these verses are right next to each other in the Bible but Jesus uses two different names for Simon Peter. Why do you think that is? (Hint: Read John 1:40-42)**

Like the chaff being separated from the wheat, "Simon" was his old self, before he knew Christ. Peter is what he became from knowing Christ. Peter did not need to keep the ways of his past. When Jesus addresses him "Simon, Simon..." it's like He's talking to Peter's childhood self. When he calls him Peter in the next verses, he is addressing his more spiritually and emotionally mature self, the self that would continue to be transformed by his faith in Christ.

Fortunately, we serve a loving and forgiving God. Jesus modeled and preached forgiveness throughout his life on earth. When he returned to His disciples after the resurrection, he gave Peter a chance for a complete "do-over" of his regretted denials.

Read aloud John 21:15-19.

Peter denied Christ three times and was able to redeem himself three times in this conversation. Notice, Jesus calls him "Simon" again in these verses, possibly suggesting Peter had regressed and would need to re-establish himself and his potential.

Peter did live up to Christ's expectations. For the next 30 years, he fought relentlessly to share Christ's words and example with others. As Jesus ordained in Matthew 16:18, Peter became "the rock" of the church and an inspiration to others.

- **Read 2 Peter 2:5-9. In this letter to other believers, what is Peter advising them to do and why?**

HOMEWORK:

Write about these questions:

- 1) Which of these can you relate to most?

Circle all that apply: a) anger b) blame c) regret

- 2) For each one you circled in question 1, write about:

"What would my life be like without _____ [Insert a, b and/or c] _____?"

(On a separate piece of paper, describe how that would affect your emotions, state of mind, relationships and spiritual life.)

- 3) Jesus himself experienced real anger and outrage in his lifetime on earth. He turned over merchants' tables in the temple (Matthew 21:12-13) and rebuked some who questioned his authority (Luke 13:10-17). Yet for his greatest injustices, he chose peace over anger and forgiveness over blame.

Read Peter's recount of Jesus' response to conflicts in 1 Peter 2:23-25. *How and why was Jesus able to let go of anger and blame?*

- 4) Just as Jesus prayed that Peter would not give in or give out, pray for yourself when you find your mind wandering toward anger, blame or regret. Genuinely try this alternative all week and assess if it has a positive impact.

FROM BROOKS

How did anger and blame affect your life after your parents were killed?

I think the anger and blame were so big, for so many years, I couldn't even see it. I tried to live as normal and happy of a life as I could. At times, I think I even had myself convinced that I had forgiven Ake and Hatch for the things they did to us that night.

But there were subtle and not so subtle indications that all was not well. I always managed to keep a happy expression up when I was around people. But when I lived in a small studio/garage apartment several miles from campus at Baylor, I would let days go by without seeing another person. I remember when I first realized that I didn't sleep at night. I might have dozed off for a few minutes here and there, but I mostly laid in bed at night with my mind racing. I didn't do well in college, and in fact, I went to six different universities and colleges, having been kicked out of three of them, before I accumulated enough hours to graduate. The good news was that I graduated. The bad news was it wasn't pretty.

By the time I ran for the senate, I was about to graduate from law school but was broke and on the verge of a divorce. Again, everything looked great from the outside, but the reality was far different. Within two months of being sworn in as an Oklahoma State Senator, I was separated from my wife and would soon be divorced. The house I was living in was in the middle of a remodel and in complete shambles. My businesses were on their back and I wasn't sure how I would ever keep these things a secret. At the capitol, people would call me Senator and treat me respectfully. My mail was addressed to "The Honorable Brooks Douglass." I didn't even know who this person was.

Ultimately, I saw that I was running and staying busy in order to avoid facing the anger and bitterness that was inside me. It wasn't until I was sitting face to face with Glen Ake that I made the connection between that bitterness and the shambles my life was really in. I felt more comfort in the chaos than I did in facing my anger. It was during that conversation that I realized I had tried everything else and nothing had worked. Maybe I should face up to the hatred.

FROM RICHARD – THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

By Richard B. Douglass, February 5, 1975



Recently a young lawyer accepted a low paying job with a foundation working with the “emerging nations” of the world. When he was asked why he took a seventy-five percent cut in salary he replied: *“There is so much strife in the world. I hope that I can help bring some harmony and peace between the people of the world.”*

Promoting peace and harmony meets an urgent need in a divided world. This role emerged early in Christian history as an important part of the Christian responsibility. Their approach differed radically from some of the modern and secular methods though. Paul described the work of the Christians as “the ministry of reconciliation.” He claimed that each believer becomes an “ambassador for Christ.”

Paul saw the principle problem of man as a sin problem. Men live out of harmony with God. They rebel against God’s authority in their lives. The first task of the Christian is to restore harmony between a person and God. Only then can there be the right kind of unity between people. The idea of reconciliation is to bring individuals who are out of harmony into a state of agreement and peace. As representatives of Christ, Christians help bring this harmony between people and God. Then they strive to bring it between individuals.

The first qualification for a reconciler is that he must first be reconciled. In II Corinthians, chapter five, Paul describes the individual who has been reconciled to God. He becomes so radically changed that it is like becoming a whole new creation. The sins of such a person are no longer

held against them. God commissions them to become His representatives in presenting the good news of salvation to others. The transformed individual should become a changer of his world.

Christians strive to be like Jesus Christ. The Apostle maintained that Christ came into the world to reconcile people to God. We are like him when we are serving the role of the peacemakers between God and men. Then we become peacemakers between men. Two individuals who have harmony with God have a basis for coming into harmony with each other.

In Galatians Paul described how the Christian helps create harmony between people. He builds on the foundation of the individual’s relationship to God. The burdens of the other person are shared by the reconciler. When he knows that someone else ministers in Christ’s name, an effort is made to strengthen and sustain that ministry. The reconciler bears his own responsibilities while willingly helping someone else with theirs. This spirit of unselfishness and concern for others provides an atmosphere in which the believer can bring harmony between individuals. As ambassadors for Christ, Christians have a continuing responsibility to bring peace between people and God and promote it between the people of the world.