



# Small Group Guide: Holy Heat

From the Sermon Series "Resolved: Resolving Conflict God's Way"

## Overview

This week's message focused on the emotion of anger and how followers of Christ are called to handle it in a biblical, God-honoring way. Anger itself is not a sin, but unchecked anger has serious spiritual, relational, and even physical consequences. As people called to a ministry of reconciliation, we must learn to submit our anger to God before it damages the relationships He has called us to steward.

## Key Takeaways

- Anger is a God-given emotion, but it must be submitted to the Holy Spirit rather than allowed to control us.
- There is a critical difference between righteous anger (concerned with God's glory being violated) and self-righteous anger (concerned with personal comfort or pride being violated).
- Unchecked anger escalates in three stages: internal anger, verbal insults, and full character assassination. Jesus assigns increasing levels of judgment to each stage.
- Unresolved anger gives the enemy a foothold, a staging ground, in our lives, our families, and our churches.
- The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom, and without it we will not handle conflict and anger in a godly way.
- We have three choices when anger arises: turn away from destructive reactions, express our emotions honestly to God, and allow God to change our perception.
- The cross did not just forgive our anger. It executed the version of us that was ruled by it.

## Discussion Questions

### Opening Question

**Begin with this question to help group members ease into the conversation:**

1. Without going into too much detail, can you describe a time when you handled anger well? What made the difference in that moment?

### Digging Into the Word

1. The sermon drew a distinction between righteous anger and self-righteous anger. Righteous anger is directed at sin or injustice that violates God's glory. Self-righteous anger is rooted in personal pride, a defensive ego, or not getting your way. How do you personally tell the difference between the two in the heat of a conflict?
2. In Ephesians 4:26-27, Paul warns believers not to let anger go unresolved because it gives the devil a foothold. The sermon described this foothold as a place, a territory, or a staging ground. What does it look like practically when the enemy gains that kind of ground in a relationship or a church community?
3. The sermon walked through three escalating levels of anger from Matthew 5:21-22: internal anger, verbal insults, and declaring someone morally worthless or beyond redemption. Have you ever witnessed or experienced this kind of escalation? What could have interrupted it at an earlier stage?
4. The sermon stated that the fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom, and that without a proper understanding of who God is, we will not handle anger and conflict rightly. How would you describe the connection between fearing God and being slow to anger?
5. Psalm 62 invites us to pour out our hearts before God. The sermon described this as a forceful, bucket-dumping kind of honesty before God. Why do you think it is easier for many people to vent to friends, family, or on social media than it is to bring raw emotion directly to God?
6. First John 3:15 says that everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. That is a strong statement. How does understanding the seriousness with which Jesus views anger among believers change the way you think about unresolved conflict in the church?

## Going Deeper

1. The sermon said, "A broken church cannot win a broken world. A divided church cannot win a divided world." Do you agree? How have you seen unresolved anger or conflict affect a church's witness to those outside of it?
2. The pastor noted that we sometimes avoid bringing our anger before God because we do not want our perspective to change. We want to stay angry. Have you ever been in that place? What finally moved you, or what do you think it would take to move someone, toward surrender?
3. Romans 6 reminds us that because we have been buried and raised with Christ, sin, including the pattern of anger, is no longer our master. How does the resurrection of Jesus practically change the way we approach our emotional lives? What does it look like to live as someone who is "dead to sin and alive to God"?

## Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group this week:

- Self-examination before conflict. The next time you feel anger rising toward a brother or sister in Christ, pause and honestly ask yourself: Is this a righteous anger over God's glory being violated, or is this a self-righteous anger over my comfort, my pride, or my preferences? Write down your answer and bring it to God in prayer.
- The David practice. Following the example of Psalm 42 and Psalm 62, find a private place this week and pour out your heart to God about something that is genuinely bothering you. Do not filter it. Then, after you have emptied it out, ask God to search your heart as David did in Psalm 139 and show you if there is anything in you that needs to change.
- Check the fruit. If you are currently carrying anger toward someone, take an honest look at what that anger is producing. Is it generating bitterness, gossip, slander, or a broken relationship? Use that fruit as a diagnostic tool to determine whether your anger is righteous or self-righteous, and take that finding back to God.
- Close the window before it closes on you. The sermon described a spiritual window of grace that God gives us to deal with offense before it calcifies into a grudge. If there is an unresolved offense in your life, commit this week

to taking the first step toward reconciliation, whether that means praying for the person, having a direct and humble conversation, or seeking the help of a trusted, neutral believer.

- Guard your words online and in conversation. For one week, make a deliberate choice not to vent about a conflict or an offense to anyone other than God. Notice how that discipline affects your heart and your relationship with the person involved.

## **Closing Prayer Focus**

Close your group time by praying together over the following:

- That God would reveal any unchecked anger in each group member's heart
- That the group would grow in the fear of the Lord as the foundation for wisdom in conflict
- That any broken or strained relationships represented in the group would move toward biblical reconciliation
- That your church community would be known as a people of peace and reconciliation, a credible witness to a divided world

## **Memory Verse for the Week**

**Proverbs 16:32** -- He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city.