

OHIO BRIGADE CAMP

BIBLE X | LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

DAY 2 — Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

Jonathan Edwards | 1741

Scripture Focus	Luke 12:1–7 Romans 3:23 John 3:16–18
Sermon	Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God — Jonathan Edwards (1741)
Theme	Sin Is Rebellion — and God's Mercy Is the Only Thing Holding Us Up
Session Length	45–60 min (adjust questions as needed)
Audience	Young men, Ohio Brigade Camp

SERMON BACKGROUND — KNOW THIS BEFORE YOU LEAD

Jonathan Edwards preached this sermon on July 8, 1741 in Enfield, Connecticut — at the height of the First Great Awakening. It is the most famous sermon in American history. When he preached it, people reportedly wept, cried out, and clung to the church pews as if the floor were giving way beneath them.

Edwards was not a fire-breather. He was a scholar and theologian who read his sermons in a quiet, measured voice. The power was not in his delivery — it was in the doctrine. He held up the truth of God's holiness and man's sin and let it do its work.

His core argument: nothing separates a sinner from hell except the merciful will of God. Not morality. Not churchgoing. Not good intentions. Only God's restraint. This was not cruelty — it was a call to wake up before mercy ran out.

The First Great Awakening context matters here. Many colonists had grown comfortable — religious on the outside, dead on the inside. Edwards and Whitefield were calling a sleeping church to genuine faith. The same diagnosis applies today.

THE THREE BIG IDEAS — EDWARDS'S FRAMEWORK

1. Sin Is Not Just Mistakes — It Is Rebellion

Edwards does not allow men to minimize sin as mere error or weakness. Sin is the deliberate choice to live outside God's authority. Every person who has not been born again stands in active rebellion against a holy God — and the ground beneath them is not as solid as they think.

- Key text: Romans 3:23 — All have sinned and fall short.

- Key text: Isaiah 59:1–2 — Sin creates separation between God and man.
- Key text: James 1:14–15 — Sin starts with desire and ends in death.

2. God's Mercy Is the Only Thing Holding You Up

Edwards's famous image: a man on slippery ground over a pit. Nothing holds him up but the hand of God. This is not metaphor — it is theology. No man deserves another breath. That he is still alive is an act of grace, not a sign that God approves of him.

- Key text: Hebrews 9:27 — It is appointed for man to die once, then judgment.
- Key text: Luke 12:4–5 — Fear the One who can destroy both soul and body.
- Key text: Proverbs 14:12 — There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is death.

3. The Door of Mercy Is Still Open — But Not Forever

Edwards closes with urgency, not despair. God does not want men to perish. That is why He sent Christ. The sermon is not a threat — it is a warning with an open door at the end. The question is whether the hearer will walk through it.

- Key text: John 3:16–18 — God sent His Son so that none would perish.
- Key text: Romans 5:6–8 — Christ died for us while we were still sinners.
- Key text: John 3:19–21 — Men love darkness rather than light.

LEADER COACHING NOTES

The Tone Is Urgency, Not Fear for Its Own Sake

Some leaders may feel awkward with Edwards's imagery — the pit, the wrath, the danger. Don't soften it. But make sure the urgency lands as love, not cruelty. God's holiness is on display in this sermon because God's love is on display. He warns because He cares.

The Opening Questions Are Critical

The study asks: Are we better than people in the past? Would God say we are good people? Use these to strip away moral self-congratulation. Many boys will compare themselves to their peers and conclude they are fine. Push them to compare themselves to God's standard, not each other's.

The Slippery Ledge Image

Spend time with this. Ask them to describe what it would feel like. The goal is not to produce anxiety — it is to produce honesty. A boy who recognizes he is not standing on solid ground is ready to hear that Someone is holding him up.

End with the Open Door

The study closes with repentance, faith, and surrender. These must not be presented as a checklist. They are a direction — a turning. Ask: Is there anything in your life that you have been calling 'fine' that you know is not? What would it look like to stop running from God today?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

Opening: Luke 12:1–7

Jesus says nothing is hidden from God. How does that change the way you think about the things you do when no one is watching?

Leader note: This is about integrity, not guilt-management. The goal is not shame but the freedom that comes from living consistently before God.

Romans 3:23 / Isaiah 59:1–2

What is your honest answer to this question: Would God call you a good person? Not compared to your friends — compared to His standard?

Leader note: Resist the urge to answer for them. Let the question sit. This is where the Day 2 study lives.

Edwards's image: the slippery ledge

Edwards says the only reason you are not in hell right now is because God has not let go of you. What do you think of that? Does it feel true? Does it make you uncomfortable? Why?

Leader note: The discomfort is the point. You are not looking for a debate about Calvinism. You are looking for honest engagement with the reality of God's holiness.

John 3:16–18 / Romans 5:6–8

If God knows all your sin and sent Christ anyway, what does that tell you about how God sees you? What does it require from you in return?

Leader note: This is the gospel. Don't rush past it. Let them sit with the weight of being loved despite being known.

Closing question

Following Christ requires repentance, faith, and surrender. What would each of those look like in your life — not as an idea, but this week?

Leader note: Make it specific. "Surrender" is a vague word. Ask: What is one thing you would have to give up or change if you genuinely put Christ first?

CLOSING CHALLENGE — SEND THEM WITH SOMETHING

"Edwards didn't preach this sermon to scare people into hell. He preached it to wake people up before it was too late. You are still here. The door is still open. The question is not whether God knows you are a sinner — He does. The

question is what you are going to do with that. No one drifts into becoming a man of faith. It starts with a decision."

Assign them one honest task before tomorrow:

- Write down one area where you have been telling yourself you are 'fine' — and one honest step toward what it would look like to actually mean it.

LEADER NOTES

Notes from this session:

Follow-up needed with:
