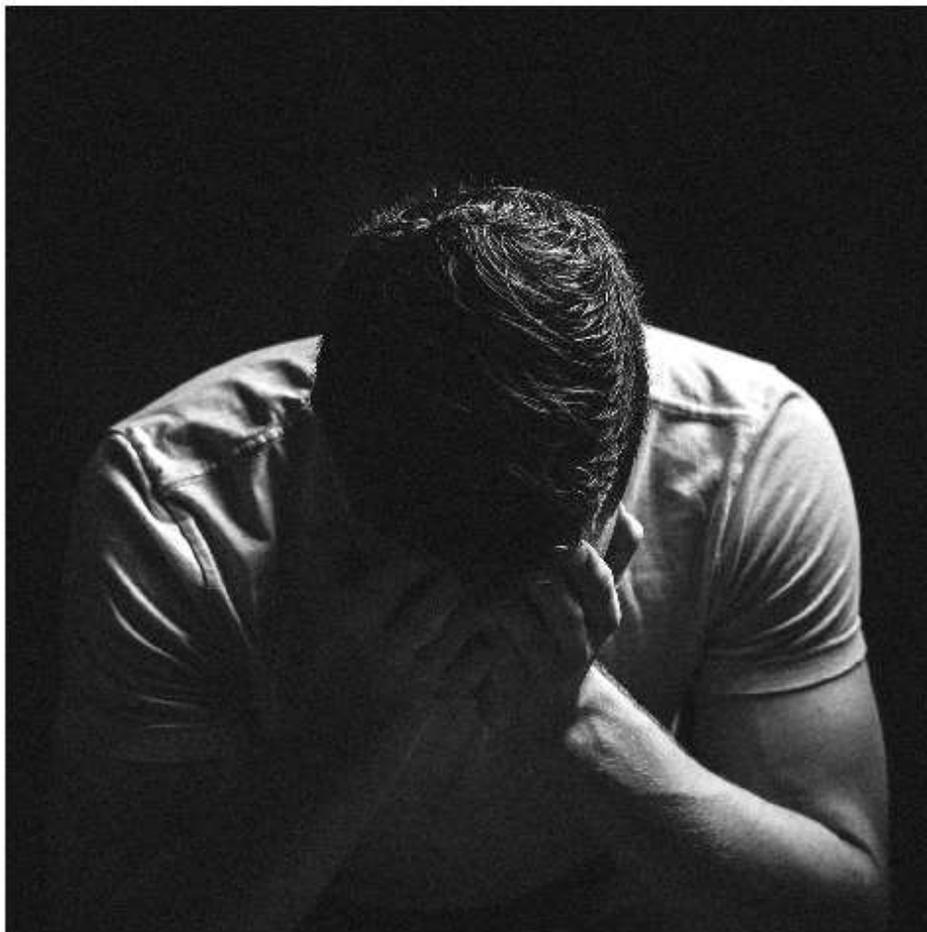


OFFENSES

DON'T TAKE THEM



ASHISH RAICHUR

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INTRODUCTION

In life all of us feel the pain of being offended. All kinds of things could cause an offense. Sometimes the smallest of things can offend us. We feel hurt. Somebody said something that offended us. We did not receive the opportunity, the recognition, or the promotion that we thought we deserved. We get offended. Once we take offense, it begins to work inside us and ultimately affects us in more ways than we imagine. A person operating out of an unresolved offense can think, say, and behave in the most irrational and uncharacteristic ways. When this plays out in church life, among God's people, we see some of the most saddening things happen—backbiting, gossip, people leaving one church for another, church splits, Christian leaders distancing themselves from each other, and most of all, a weakened Body. However, if we understand how to overcome offense, such things can be avoided and the local church as well as the Body of Christ can be that much stronger.

What does the Bible say about this common occurrence in life? How should we respond when we are offended? How do we get rid of the negative emotions that come when we are offended? In this simple little study, hopefully, we will gain answers to these questions and learn to live totally free of offense.

Always live above the line of offense.

God Bless!
Ashish Raichur

1. A TRAP AND A TRIP-UP

When we are offended we feel insulted and hurt by what someone said or did. Different people have different reactions when offended. Some get angry and retaliate. Some withdraw, disconnect, and distance themselves. Some retaliate through other means by defaming, disparaging, spreading ill will, etc. We've all been in this place and have reacted in one or more of these ways. We feel we have a right to do so because we have been offended. We think that getting back in one way or another, will make us feel better and ease the pain we felt.

However, let's try to get a biblical perspective on the issue of offense. Perhaps we will see things differently then.

Matthew 16:23

But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

The word "offense" in Greek is '*skandalon*' and it refers to two things:

1. **A trap:** It refers to a trap stick (a bait), which is the trigger of a trap. You touch the trap stick (or catch the bait) and the trap comes down over you. You get trapped (snared).
2. **A trip-up:** A stumbling block. It refers to a rock which trips a person and causes one to stumble and fall. So offense is something that is intended to trip a person and cause them to fall.

The end result of the offense is to draw someone into error or sin.

In this incident in Matthew 16, Peter seemed to be speaking out of much concern and sincerity for the Lord Jesus. However, Jesus saw something different. He saw that Satan was the source and Satan was an offense, a snare, and a stumbling block, to the things of God which Jesus was pursuing.

An offense is Satan's trap (bait) and Satan's trip-up. It is Satan's attempt to trap us or trip us up so that we do not move forward in the purposes of God.

The next time you feel offended, regardless of who or what caused it, stop to think what this means spiritually. It is not about the individual. It is not about the situation. There are things hanging in the balance that are more serious than the individual who offended you or the situation that offended you. The offense is a trap and a trip-up. If you fall for it,

satan will get an opportunity to trap you or trip you up in your journey into the purposes of God.

Do you want to give satan such an opportunity in your life? Surely not! Regardless of the cause or source of the offense, your one response when offended, is to keep offense out of your heart. Offense must have no room in your heart.

Reflection



1. Reflect on a recent time when you were offended or had the opportunity to get offended.
 - a. What caused you to feel offended?
 - b. How did you feel? How did you know you were offended?
 - c. What did you do? How did you handle things when you were offended?
 - d. Looking back, are you happy about the way you handled things when you were offended? Was Jesus glorified? Could you have handled things differently?
 - e. Do you need to do anything to rebuild your relationship with the person who offended you (if any)?

2. OFFENSES WILL COME

In this chapter, we consider three different sources of offenses we commonly face. These of course are not the only sources, but perhaps the most common:

- Offenses that come from the world,
- Offenses that come inadvertently,
- Offenses by those in authority.

We also discuss three reasons why believers could face offenses in their spiritual lives. These are specific to the believer:

- Offended with God,
- Offended because of Jesus Christ,
- Offended because of the Word and the Spirit.

Let's look at three sources of offenses that are common:

Offenses That Come From The World

Matthew 18:6-7

6 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

The Greek word for offenses is '*skandalon*,' a word we have studied in the earlier chapter. Offenses, as in the context of these verses in Matthew 18, is intended to cause one of His "little ones" (innocent, humble ones), that is, believers to sin.

Three things are outlined in Verse 7:

1. The world is full of offenses,
2. Offenses will come,
3. Offenses are delivered through people.

The world is full of offenses. Hence Jesus said "*woe to the world because of offenses.*" The world is full of traps and trip-ups for those who believe in Jesus, waiting to cause them to sin, go into error, and draw them away from the faith. In fact as time progresses toward

the end, the Lord Jesus warned in Matthew 24:10: *“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.”* That is the way the world is going to be.

Offenses will come. As believers we are not insulated from offenses. The world is full of offenses and we are living in this world. The world will hurl its offenses—traps and trip-ups—against you. Just be prepared for it. And sadly, sometimes the offenses may also come through other believers.

Offenses are delivered through people. When Jesus said, *“that man by whom the offense comes,”* He was letting us know that people are the ones who deliver these offenses. Offenses come because people may say and do things around you that may offend you.

Jesus has already declared what happens to the person through whom the offense comes. Woe, trouble, doom to that person. If someone is throwing you a trap and a trip-up to sin against the Lord, just step aside and let God handle it. There is nothing you need to do against them.

Offenses That Come Inadvertently

Ecclesiastes 7:21-22

21 Also do not take to heart everything people say, Lest you hear your servant cursing you.

22 For many times, also, your own heart has known That even you have cursed others.

Sometimes we are offended by people who don't mean to offend us. They may say or do things in jest, or unintentionally, and yet we are offended by what they said or did. We must learn not to take such things to heart. In other words, handle these things lightly. Let it go. Don't make a big issue out of it. Give others the grace you would like extended to you. Each of us at times have said and done things without much thought and later realized someone got offended, even though that was not our intent.

Offended By Those In Authority

1 Peter 2:18-21

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

In 1 Peter 2, from Verse 13 onward, Peter is instructing believers concerning submission to authority. While today, the context is not the same as in New Testament times, the truth remains the same. As employees, we submit to those in authority over us in the

workplace. As citizens we submit to civil authority. As family members we submit to those in authority over us at home.

What should we do if those in authority over us are harsh, treat us wrongfully, and cause us to suffer, even when we do good? In today's context this could be bosses who are unreasonable, bosses who are partial, who overlook our performance, who intentionally withhold raises etc. What should we do? Peter has answered this saying:

- Be submissive,
- Endure grief,
- Take it patiently.

Only God can give us the grace to do so. Through the empowering of the Holy Spirit we are able to do this, even as Christ did. We try to see things from their perspective. We try to see the big picture which they may be seeing as people in leadership, which we often miss. We try to understand the pressure leaders are under.

If there is repeated injustice and danger to our well-being, we must move ourselves to a place of safety. Our modern day context gives us the opportunity of removing ourselves to a place of safety, changing jobs, etc., unlike New Testament times, where servants did not have the opportunity to do so. Further, in most settings we can express our points of view, to discuss with those in leadership about the areas we feel violated and raise issues in legally and ethically acceptable ways.

The most important thing in all of this is to keep our hearts free from offense toward those in authority. Offenses will come. We will be offended by those in authority. But the New Testament does not permit us to hold this offense toward them.

What if you were offended by a spiritual leader, for example, the pastor of your local church? Perhaps they made a decision you did not understand. Perhaps, they picked someone else to lead an area of ministry, when you were eagerly waiting to serve in that capacity. Maybe they overlooked the many years of faithful service you have rendered and celebrated someone else who has not served anywhere close to how long you have served. There could be so many different scenarios in church life that can cause one to get offended. What should you do? Well, the same thing that Peter wrote about leaders, would apply. Be submissive. Endure grief. Take it patiently. Where possible, express your concern or point of view in acceptable and honorable ways. Or if there is abuse, danger, and harm to your well-being, move to a place of safety. Whatever you do, hold no offense against any person.

Now, let's discuss three reasons why believers could face offenses in their spiritual lives:

Offended With God

Genesis 4:3-7

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

Cain was angry and sad-faced. He was sulking. He had a scowl on his face. He was offended with God. In Cain's eyes God seemed unfair, partial, and unjust. But God was being fair. Cain had the same opportunity as Abel, to do what was right before God and make an offering that would be accepted by God. But Cain wanted God to work on his terms. That was pride.

Cain was offended with God and yet was unwilling to come to God in a manner prescribed by God. In this place of offense and pride, sin was waiting to take a hold of Cain. Yet God wanted Cain to gain a mastery over sin, by doing what was right before Him.

Sometimes, believers get offended with God. All kinds of life situations could make them feel that God has been unfair and unjust toward them. They feel they deserve better. They cannot understand why someone else got blessed, or why someone else got something better than them. They want God to do things on their terms. This is spiritual pride. It is pride that gets us offended with God. The danger of being in such a state, where one is offended with God, is that sin is waiting to gain control over us. This offense becomes a point of entry (a door) for sin, and thereby allows the devil to come in and control a vulnerable area in the life of the believer.

The antidote is to repent. It is to come to God and acknowledge that He is always good, just, and fair. It is we who have misunderstood who He is. It is we who were in pride and wanted things our way.

When the Prophet Felt Let Down

Matthew 11:2-6

2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples

3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:

5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

6 And blessed is he who is not offended (*Greek 'skandalizō'*) because of Me."

Try to imagine this scenario. John the Baptist was the one who divinely recognized Jesus and introduced Him to the world. John was the one who declared Him to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. John was the one who announced Jesus as the Baptizer in the Holy Ghost. But now John has been put in prison, Jesus is continuing His ministry, but is not in any way doing anything to bring John out of prison. Just imagine what must have gone through John's mind—"If Jesus is truly the Messiah, He would undoubtedly deliver me from prison. But this Man is not doing anything. Is He truly the Messiah?" And so John sends his disciples to find out. Jesus ends his response by encouraging John not to be offended because of Him. To paraphrase this into John's context, Jesus was essentially saying, "John, I know you feel let down, finding yourself in prison. But don't let offense get into your heart."

When we feel seemingly "let down" by God, know He never does let anyone down. And most of all do not let offense toward Him get into your heart. He knows what to do in every situation.

Offended Because Of Jesus Christ: A Rock Of Offense

Isaiah prophesied about Jesus Christ and referred to Him as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense:

Isaiah 8:13-15

**13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.
14 He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
15 And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken."**

Isaiah 28:16

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.

Very interestingly, both the Apostle Paul in Romans and the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter, quote Isaiah's prophecy concerning Jesus Christ.

The Jewish people rejected Jesus when He came because He did not fit their expectation of the Messiah. The Apostle Paul writes about the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Romans 9:30-33. Israel stumbled at Jesus Christ because they were unable to receive righteousness by faith. Instead they sought to establish their own righteousness through the Law.

Here is what the Apostle Peter wrote:

1 Peter 2:6-8

6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF CORNERSTONE, ELECT,

PRECIOUS, AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY NO MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME.”

7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE,”

8 and “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

To us who believe, Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone, and He is precious. Yet to some He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

Jesus Christ is offensive to some, and they take it out on us His people, His Church. Don't be surprised if people offend you because of your faith in Jesus Christ. People are offended because of the Christ in you. As the Apostle Paul stated: *“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life”* (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

Jesus foretold that His disciples would be offended at the time of His crucifixion, in Matthew 26:31,33: *“Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble (Greek ‘skandalizō’) because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.’ Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble (Greek ‘skandalizō’) because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”* Though Peter tried to be brave, he too stumbled.

Jesus foretold the coming offenses for His disciples in several places. Consider John 16:1-2: *“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble (Greek ‘skandalizō’). They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.”*

So believers will face offense because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Offended Because Of The Word And The Spirit

Here is another prophecy from Isaiah:

Isaiah 28:9-13

9 “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?

10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little.”

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people,

12 To whom He said, “This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,” And, “This is the refreshing”; Yet they would not hear.

13 But the word of the LORD was to them, “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,” That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

Sometimes people get offended by the Word, the truth of God. The Word is meant to build us up, to bring us knowledge and understanding. Isaiah 28:11-12 refers to the work of the Spirit and speaking with other tongues, as it is quoted by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:21. Yet people reject this as well. They stumble, fall, get tripped up, and trapped because they are unable to receive the Word or the Spirit.

This plays out in the life of a believer in the following ways:

When God Stretches Your Understanding

Sometimes you as a believer get offended by the Word and the Spirit because it does not fit into your frame of reference. God offends the mind to expose the heart. So when you think you've got all your theology just right and you are in perfect flow with the Holy Spirit, along comes someone through whom the Word and Spirit are being expressed in ways you never imagined. It literally shakes your understanding. You have a choice to make. You can either get offended by it and reject it altogether or you can ask God to give you the grace to grow and enlarge your spiritual understanding, capacity, and experience. **[Note:** We are not referring to heretical teaching. Something that is a heresy or an error should be called so. We are referring to something that is of God, but just not what you are used to.]

The wrong thing to do is to start fighting something you do not understand. How often in Christendom we see believers mud-slinging each other simply because they stumble at the work of the Word and the Spirit, through someone else. They are unable to receive the expression of the Word and the Spirit and so are offended and then take to tearing down something they do not understand.

When Others Misunderstood the Work of God in You

The second way a believer could face offense because of the Word and the Spirit is when those who do not understand what God is doing in your life, attack you. Sometimes people attack, offend, mock, criticize you, and call you names, because they are unable to understand the work of God through you, by His Word and His Spirit.

Jesus illustrated that for us in the parable of the sower, when He mentioned the seed that fell on stony ground. Jesus spoke of persecution coming because of the Word causing one to be offended:

Matthew 13:21

yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles (Greek *'skandalizō'*).

The Apostle Paul faced offense for preaching the message of the cross of Jesus Christ,

instead of promoting circumcision, in his day:

Galatians 5:11

And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense (Greek 'skandalon') of the cross has ceased.

When Standing for the Word and the Spirit's Work Is Unpopular

Galatians 1:9-10

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

The way of popular opinion seems to be as described in Romans 1. People

- ✓ suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18),
- ✓ are futile in their thoughts (Romans 1:21),
- ✓ had foolish hearts that are darkened (Romans 1:21),
- ✓ profess to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:22),
- ✓ exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:25),
- ✓ did not like to retain God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28),
- ✓ had a debased mind, doing those things which are not fitting (Romans 1:28),
- ✓ practice things deserving of death (Romans 1:32),
- ✓ approve of those who practice things deserving of death (Romans 1:32).

Today when we stand for what God has spoken concerning marriage, sexuality, family, role of the husband or wife, parental honor, honoring of civil authority, submission to God appointed leadership, and so on, the world mocks us. They label this as being intolerant, bigoted, and call it hatred. What should the believer do? How should the Church respond? How should Christian leaders respond? The Church has only one option. As Paul taught: *"the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15). The Church is called to be the upholder and sustainer of truth in society. We cannot afford to compromise God's truth to avoid offense and to please men. We must speak the truth in love, without compromising the truth. We love people just as they are, but also present God's truth that has the power to transform. Some may find the truth of God's Word and the work of His Spirit offensive and retaliate. We have no choice but to side in with the Word of God, and take our stand.

Many More Opportunities

Offenses will come. As believers we will have numerous opportunities to get offended. We have outlined a few in this chapter. The real issue is how we handle offenses when they come. Remember every opportunity to get offended is an opportunity to fall into the

enemy's trap and get tripped up by the enemy. We must be resolute that in no situation, under no circumstance, will we give place to offense in our lives.

Reflection



1. Have you faced any of the kinds of offenses discussed in this chapter? Reflect. How did you handle things in the various situations listed below?
 - a. Offenses that come from the world
 - b. Offenses that come inadvertently
 - c. Offenses by those in authority
 - d. Offended with God
 - e. Offended because of Jesus Christ
 - f. Offended because of the Word and the Spirit

3. THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Living Above The Line Of Offense

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

Matthew 12:35

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

We must guard our hearts, our inner person, for out of our hearts come the forces that shape our lives.

What is in our hearts will come out in our lives.

If we want to change what is happening in our lives, we must change the deposit in our hearts.

As we have seen, offense is an opportunity to be trapped or get tripped up. It causes us to wander off into sin and error. Offenses will come to us through all kinds of people in all kinds of situations. However, the choice to take offense or not take it, is ours. We can choose not to be offended or we can choose to get offended, when an offense comes our way.

You can make the choice the moment you are faced with the offense—something someone said or did that hurts, insults, or angers you. You can choose to guard your heart with all diligence and give this offense no landing ground. You can choose to refuse to accept the deposit of this offense into your heart. You know that a bad deposit will result in bad things being released into your life.

When you are presented with an offense you can choose to live above it. Choose to live above the line of offense. Do not stoop down to receive it. Live at the higher level of love (will discuss this in a later chapter).

Consider what the Apostle Paul said:

Acts 24:16

This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Paul made diligent effort to keep his conscience free of offense toward God and men.

The word “strive” in Greek *‘askeo’* means to train, exercise, to strain, take pains, and labor.

The word “offense” Paul uses here in the Greek is *‘aproskopos’* which is different from *‘skandalon,’* which we have seen earlier. Offense *‘aproskopos,’* has a three-fold meaning:

1. Not causing to stumble, meaning not causing others to go into sin.
2. Not stumbling, meaning not falling into sin, being blameless.
3. No consciousness of sin, a heart clear of sin.

So, Paul was making every effort to keep his conscience clear of sin and wrongdoing. He did not permit sin in any form—committing sin, causing others to sin, or even living under a consciousness of sin—to enter his inner person. He chose to keep his heart (and thereby his conscience) clean and clear.

We can choose to live above offense and keep our hearts clean and clear, toward God and men. It will not be easy. We must train ourselves, exercise ourselves, and strive to do this. But it is worth it. This is how we live above the line of offense.

Let's discuss some important heart-choices we must make when we face an offense.

The Virtue Of Letting It Go

Genesis 50:15-21

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.”

16 So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded, saying,

17 ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.” ‘Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.’” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

18 Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we are your servants.”

19 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

What an opportunity Joseph had to get back at his brothers who had terribly wronged him. The brothers were anticipating the worst. And yet as we see, there seemed to be no trace of ill-will, hatred, or bitterness in Joseph's heart toward his brothers for what they had done to him. He had let things go, a long time ago. He saw things from a bigger, greater, and grander perspective. He saw what God saw.

Like Joseph, we must make the deliberate choice to let go of what has offended us. Let go of the person (or people) through whom the offense came. Let go of what was said and done.

See things from God's perspective. Even if you don't have all the answers for the questions—Why did they do this to me? What will all this lead to? and When will they realize how they have wronged me?—just choose to let it go. Trust that God will work out something good and great through all of this and you will not let this offense get into your heart. Your priority is to guard your heart and so you make the deliberate choice to let this go. You choose not to receive the offense.

Let God Vindicate You

Romans 12:17-21

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

20 Therefore "IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If we follow through with what we are instructed in Romans 12:17-21, when we are offended, we will do these things:

- ✓ We will not retaliate by offending our offender.
- ✓ We choose to pursue peace with the one who has offended us.
- ✓ We do good and bless the one who has offended us.

When we do these things, we are in effect stepping out of the way and allowing God to vindicate us. He is the righteous Judge, who sees our hearts and knows our motives. He will vindicate us if we choose to leave things in His hands.

And this is exactly the example Jesus set us:

1 Peter 2:23

who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

Don't Let Pride Rule Your Heart

The reason we hold on to our offenses is because our pride has been hurt.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Jesus said that He walked with a gentle, humble, meek, and lowly heart. We should learn from Him and follow Him in this.

When we walk like Jesus, being meek and lowly at heart, we cannot be offended.

Consider this parable that Jesus shared:

Luke 14:7-11

7 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them:

8 “When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do

not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him;

9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place.

10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.

11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Lord Jesus is teaching us to walk with meekness and lowliness intentionally. Walk in such a way that you cannot be offended. When you are low (humble at heart), no one can push you any lower! They don't have the opportunity to offend you. If you are told to step down, your heart is already at a place lower than that. You cannot be offended.

As Christian leaders it is so easy for us to get offended, when our pride is hurt. We expect people to call us by our titles, and when someone does not, we get offended. We expect to be invited to the front and given the best seat in the meeting and if that does not happen we are offended. We expect to be recognized and acknowledged and all our laurels proclaimed, and when that does not happen we get offended. These are offenses that come into our hearts because we let pride rule our hearts. Instead, if like Jesus we walked with a meek and lowly heart, there is no expectation of superior treatment, and hence no opportunity to be offended.

Two other important heart-decisions we must make:

1. Not to operate out of an offended heart, and
2. To choose to walk in love.

We address these individually in the next two chapters.

Reflection



1. Why is it important to guard our hearts from offense getting in?
2. Have you let go of offenses? Do you need to pray and ask God to cleanse and clear your heart of offenses that you may have been holding on to?
3. When you are offended, do these things. Review the three “first responses,” when you are presented with an offense, outlined in Romans 12:17-21.
4. How can you intentionally maintain a “meek and lowly heart” like Jesus, so that your pride is not hurt by anything, and hence there is no opportunity to be offended in this manner?

4. DON'T OPERATE OUT OF OFFENSE

In the previous chapter, we discussed three important heart-choices we must make when we face an offense:

1. Let it go.
2. Respond according to Romans 12:17-21 and let God vindicate you.
3. Don't let pride rule your heart.

This chapter addresses the fourth important heart-choice we could make, when we are offended. We make the deliberate choice not to operate out of an offended heart. This calls for self-restraint.

Two Offenses Won't Make One Right

Ecclesiastes 10:4

If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, Do not leave your post; For conciliation pacifies great offenses.

Imagine a modern-day scenario. Let's say you messed up at work. Maybe it was just one small thing you failed to do or it could be a serious and costly mistake. Your boss is angry with you. He expresses his displeasure through a series of nasty emails, verbal affronts, poor ratings, and disapprovals to higher-ups. Of course you are offended by his reaction. You feel he is overreacting. You want to quit, walk out, or protest. You want to let him know what he did to you was not what you deserved. On the other hand the Scripture encourages us: *"Do not leave your post."* Don't respond out of your feeling of offense. Staying calm, being gentle, yielding, and keeping your composure in such a situation will quiet things down.

An Offended Heart Is A Wounded Heart

An offended heart is a wounded heart. There is hurt inside. The spirit is "broken."

Proverbs 17:22

A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones.

A broken spirit dries up the bones. This means that a broken spirit "saps the life out of you," leaves you drained and really tears you down.

Proverbs 18:14

The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?

The inner person is what sustains us through challenging times, including times of sickness. But if the inner person is wounded, hurt, and broken, the person does not have what it takes to be sustained through challenging times.

So if we take offense and allow it to get into our hearts, we are actually in a place of weakness, not strength. We are at the low end of things and not really giving our best. We tend to make wrong decisions and poor choices. We are often blinded by our offense. Our judgment is often blurred by the hurt we feel.

When we operate from this place of hurt, we tend to hurt others. Hurting people hurt other people. Sometimes it is done as a way of defense, but nevertheless we are hurting those closest to us.

Hence it is best not to take offense. If, however, you have been offended, exercise self-restraint, and choose not to operate out of an offended heart. Let God heal and help you to let go, forgive, clear, and cleanse your heart of the offense. Then move ahead.

Offense Births Bitterness

If we do not deal with the offenses in our hearts promptly, it will give rise to wrong emotions including bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, and hatred. We get bitter toward the person (or people) who offended us.

What is it like to have bitterness in our hearts?

Hebrews 12:14-15

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Bitterness is like a root that, if unchecked, will grow up and cause trouble—all kinds of trouble—for us. It will also extend its influence through us to others, causing them to take on what we are experiencing. If unchecked, bitterness becomes contagious and spreads. Others also become bitter like us.

In Hebrews 12:15 the warning about bitterness is interestingly prefixed with the warning not to fall short of the grace of God. God is the God of abundant grace. He has overflowing, immeasurable grace available to all. However, bitterness in our hearts can cause us to fail to receive what God can do for us, in us, and through us, by His amazing grace.

If unchecked, bitterness leads to unforgiveness which then hinders faith (Mark 11:22-25).

If unchecked, bitterness leads to hatred. Hatred blinds (1 John 2:9,11). We grope as those who are in darkness, seemingly going somewhere, but not knowing where we are going, because we are blinded by hatred.

Hatred is murder (1 John 3:15). When we operate out of bitterness we often resort to murder. We no longer hesitate to assassinate the character, the reputation, and the honor of the person (or people) who offended us. Sometimes we generalize this to all people. We say "everyone is like this." One offense, that entered the heart, gives rise to bitterness that leads to a generalized hatred toward all.

All such negative emotions will only serve to trouble us and damage us further, if they are not eliminated from our hearts.

Don't Dispense Offense

As Hebrews 12:15 points out, bitterness, if unchecked spills over from our hearts to the hearts of those around us.

When we operate out of offense we begin to dispense, distribute, and spread feelings of offense into other people. Their thinking, reasoning, and perspective is also blurred by the things we tell them.

Romans 16:17

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses (Greek 'skandalon'), contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Resolve Not To Obstruct Or Offend

Romans 14:10,13

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block (Greek 'proskomma') or a cause to fall (Greek 'skandalon') in our brother's way.

In Romans 14, Paul addresses the fact that different believers may view things like food, special days, etc., differently. He then admonished us, that as believers, we are not to judge each other in these matters. Each one of us must be fully persuaded in our own minds and know that we will give an account of all things to the Lord. However, while we have this liberty, we must be careful not to put a stumbling block or do something that makes another believer trip up and fall.

In Romans 14:13, "a stumbling block" is the Greek word '*proskomma*' meaning "an

obstacle against which one may dash his foot.” The words “a cause to fall” come from the Greek word ‘*skandalon*’ which we have seen earlier.

As believers, we are not to obstruct or offend one another.

We obstruct and offend each other when we try to take the place of the Lord and begin to judge each other in matters that are of no consequence (Romans 14:4) and where the Lord Himself has given us the liberty to make our own choices and be accountable to Him (Romans 14:12).

We obstruct and offend each other when we show contempt, look down, despise, condescend, think we are better, and treat the other person as nothing.

All said and done, we must make the deliberate choice not to receive an offense and not to operate out of offense.

Reflection



1. An offended heart is a wounded heart. How does holding an offense affect us personally?
2. What are some of the negative emotions birthed out of offense? How do these affect us and those around us?
3. According to Romans 14:10,13 what are two things we must not engage in to ensure we do not obstruct or offend?

5. LOVE KEEPS US FREE

In the previous chapters, we have discussed four important heart-choices that we must make when we face an offense:

1. Let it go.
2. Respond according to Romans 12:17-21 and let God vindicate you.
3. Don't let pride rule your heart.
4. Don't operate out of offense.

This chapter addresses the fifth important heart-choice we make, when we are offended. We make the deliberate choice to walk in love. Love keeps our hearts clean, clear, and free.

Love Clears Your Heart

1 John 2:10

He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling (Greek 'skandalon') in him.

The greatest antidote to offense is God's love flowing through us.

When we are offended, insulted, and angered, we feel the pain of it. But at that moment, we invite God's love that has been poured into our hearts by His Spirit (Romans 5:5) to flow through us and to the person (or people) who have offended us.

When we choose to do this, and maintain a heart of love, we abide in the light. God's light floods our beings. Our hearts are clean, clear, and free. Offense ('skandalon') does not have any place in us. There is nothing that can trap us or trip us up. Love gives offense no opportunity. Love and offense cannot reside together.

With the love of God in our hearts, we release forgiveness and blessing to those who offended us.

We can now speak to the person (or people) who offended us, with nothing but love in our hearts toward them. We can point out what they did that hurt us. And we can do it without feelings of anger, hurt, revenge, or ill-will. We are able to do it in love and with a spirit of forgiveness.

Love Conquers All

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

Proverbs 17:9

He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

When we move in love, in response to an offense, we are not looking to take revenge on our offender. We seek to cover their wrongdoing or whatever it is they did, that caused us to feel offended.

We are watchful of our words about them to other people. We refuse to repeat the matter in a manner that distorts, disparages, or demeans who they truly are. We are cautious not to permit our words to drive a wedge between them and others

This is the love that conquers all. This is the love that triumphs over offense. This love triumphs over the traps and trip-ups that the enemy was waiting to lay for us.

Love, No Matter What

1 John 4:11

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

To love with the love of God in a time of offense is no small task. There are numerous reasons why we feel our offender does not deserve such a response from us. But that is when we remind ourselves that if God so loves us, in such an indescribable manner and infinite measure, then we have no other choice, but to love our offender similarly. We love the one (or the ones) who has offended us, no matter what.

Love In Deed, Not Just Word

1 John 3:18

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy...

This is not just something we spout out intellectually or theoretically, but something we do in real life. Our love is genuine. It is true. It is real. It flows from our hearts. It erases the past. It releases the offender from their offense. This is the way we live.

Love releases not just our offender. It releases us. We are clean, clear, and free.

Love releases us to live above the line of offense. Always live above the line of offense. Always live in love.

Reflection



1. Is there someone (or some people) who has offended you, that you need to release in love? Take some time to go over this chapter and apply each love-action toward that person (or people).

Partner With All Peoples Church

All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of books are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

We invite you to partner with us financially by sending either a one-time gift or a monthly financial gift. Any amount that you can send to help us in this work across our nation will be greatly appreciated.

You can send your gift by cheque / bank draft payable to “All Peoples Church” to our office address. Else you can remit your contribution directly by bank transfer using our bank account details.

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Also, please remember to pray for us and our ministry whenever you can.

Thank You and God Bless!

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Also visit our church website for free Audio and Video sermons, Sermon notes (apcwo.org/sermons), and many other resources you can use.

ATTEND A WEEKEND SCHOOL

Weekend Schools, held in Bangalore, are geared to train and equip believers in specific areas of life and ministry. These are conveniently held on a Saturday 9am-6pm. Weekend schools are open to all believers from all churches and across denominations, who are interested in being trained and equipped. Below is a list of weekend schools that are currently being hosted.

Weekend School of Prophetic Ministry

Weekend School of Healing and Deliverance

Weekend School on Gifts of the Spirit

Weekend School of Prayer and Intercession

Weekend School on Inner Wholeness

Weekend School on Lifestyle Evangelism

Weekend School on God@Work

Weekend School of Urban Missions and Church Planting

Weekend School on Christian Apologetics

Please visit: apcwo.org/weekendschool for current schedule and to register online

HOST A CHRISTIAN LEADERS CONFERENCE

All Peoples Church provides Spirit anointed equipping and impartation for pastors, local church leadership, leaders of Christian organizations and others engaging in Christian ministry. In addition to anointed teaching, Spirit-led ministry and impartation, our teams engage in personal interaction and discussions with participants. Each Christian Leaders Conference runs typically for 2 to 3 days focused on a specific theme. Participants will leave renewed, empowered and equipped for greater impact and effectiveness in their ministry. Christian Leaders Conferences are typically hosted by a local church, a Christian ministry, a missions organization or denominational head-office for churches and pastors in its area or within its network or denomination. The hosting organization will cover the expenses of the conference as well as inviting participants. All Peoples Church will send its ministry team to serve the participants at the Christian Leaders Conference.

Some of the themes that our teams commonly minister on:

- **Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God**
- **Presence and Glory**
- **Kingdom Builders** (The Kingdom of God and Kingdom Building)
- **Level Ground**
- **The House of God**
- **Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry**
- **Ministering Healing and Deliverance**
- **Gifts of the Spirit**
- **Marriage and Family**
- **Equipping The Saints and Marketplace Transformation**

For additional details and a current listing of themes for Christian Leaders Conference, please visit: apcwo.org/CLC

To schedule and plan a Christian Leaders Conference please email us at: contact@apcwo.org

About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to **contact@apcwo.org**

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step in to our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)**. Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven."

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him wholeheartedly.

"... through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, You shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

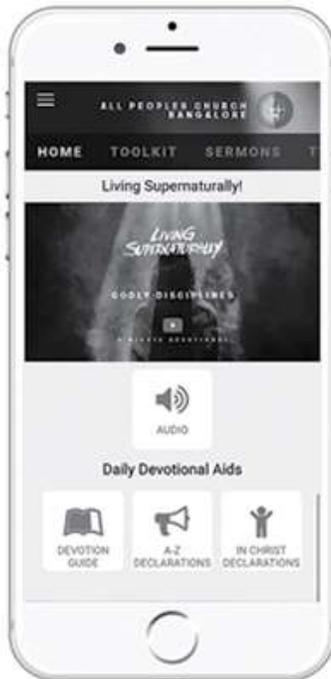
Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

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All Peoples Church Bible College

apcbiblecollege.org

All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders and miracles—all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At APC-BC in addition to sound teaching we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

We offer three programs:

- One-year Certificate in Theology and Christian Ministry (C.Th.)
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- Three-year Bachelor's in Theology and Christian Ministry (B.Th.)

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To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit: apcbiblecollege.org

APC-BC is accredited by the Nations
Association for Theological
Accreditation (NATA).



In life all kinds of things could cause an offense. Once we take offense, this works inside us, ultimately affecting us in more ways than we imagine. When we operate out of an offended heart we often think, say, and behave in the most irrational and uncharacteristic ways. When this plays out in church life, among God's people, we see some of the most saddening things happen!

What does the Bible say about offense? How should we respond when we are offended? How do we get rid of the negative emotions that come when we are offended? This simple yet enlightening study from God's Word could provide answers to these questions and help you live totally free of offense.

Always live above the line of offense!

Ashish Raichur

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