

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Matthew 6:14 *For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

DEFINITION OF THE WORD OFFENSE

Matthew 18:6 *Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*

1. The word for offense in Matthew, Luke and many other places is the Greek word “skandalon” and meant the part of a trap to which the bait is attached, the trigger.

A. A modern day mouse trap is a great example. The intended offense is the bait. When the bait is taken, the trap stick/trigger is released and the bar slams down killing its victim. In the same way, our enemy, the devil, provides us with an opportunity for an offense (the bait). As we take the bait and act on our offense, we are caught in the devil’s trap to do his bidding! (Matthew 18:34)



2. Ancient people built walls around cities for safety against their enemies. The stronger the wall, the greater the safety. An offended person builds walls around themselves.

- Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

3. Unresolved offenses cause people to filter everything through that offense, past hurts, rejections, etc. They ultimately find it impossible to believe God and others who are not “on their side.” Use the QR code for a deeper study.



AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY OF THE ENEMY

1. Because we have been called to a higher life, our enemy, the devil, has declared war against us.

- 1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

2. One of his greatest weapons he uses in and against the Church is to use opportunities in life that cause us to be offended with others. Although this may seem like a small thing (because for many it’s become a way of life) it is, in reality, a spiritually life threatening emotion that leads to other destructive behavior.

- Matthew 18:6-9 *Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. (Luke 17:1-4). Jesus is stressing the importance of dealing with this attitude and behavior!*
 - Matthew 24:10-13 *And then [in the end time] many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*
3. Following are a few examples where an offense led to terrible consequences.
 - A. Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-8 | Cain was offended that God accepted his brother Abel's sacrifice. This led to the first murder recorded in the Bible!
 - B. Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50 | Joseph's brothers were offended by his dreams. Joseph's coat given by Jacob only added "fuel to the fire."
 - C. Absalom in 2 Samuel 13-19 | Absalom's offense toward Amnon, his half-brother and against his father, King David, caused him to divide the Kingdom and bring tremendous destruction to Israel, ultimately costing his life.
 4. Notice the condition of society in the last days. Many (a great number, most) will be (constantly) offended.
 - Matthew 24:10-13 *And then many will be offended (skandalizo: creating a snare for others), will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. An unchecked offense leads to betrayal and betrayal leads to hatred. It also opens us to deception.*
 - Paul's description of the end time in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 is very similar.
 5. The parable of the unforgiving (offended) servant in Matthew 18:21-35 reveals the consequences for acting out an offense.
 - A. The offense -- Even though he was in great debt (millions of dollars by today's standards), he was unconditionally forgiven! However, he quickly found someone who owed him a very small amount but who couldn't pay it back. Offended, he had him thrown in jail until the amount was paid.
 - B. The consequence -- He was handed over to the torturers! An offense, allowed to stay, will grieve the heart of God and will release torment upon OUR life, not necessarily on the one who offended us. It is like the proverbial saying that we drink the poison expecting the other one to die.

WHAT TO DO WHEN I'M OFFENDED...

1. Understand how God feels about offenses, anger against others, etc. (Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4)
1. Although offenses WILL come, the Bible states that we CAN live above things that cause us to stumble, sin or be offended!
 - Psalm 119:165 *Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.*
2. Joseph had cause to be greatly offended with his brothers who wanted to kill him but sold him into slavery instead. Then throughout the years, Joseph was in Egypt, mistreated and forgotten in prison. But God saw his righteous spirit and delivered him with a great deliverance, making him second to Pharaoh himself! When he had the opportunity to reveal himself to his brothers he makes a very dramatic and freeing statement:
 - Genesis 50:19-21 *Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 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. Now do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Three important steps

1. Tear DOWN every thought that comes against the Word of God. Undoubtedly Joseph confessed his sin by agreeing with God about his sin. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5; 1 John 1:9)
2. Joseph FORGAVE his brothers. Forgiveness is not based on whether the one who offended repents or changes. It is a DECISION and an issue of our heart and between God and us. (Proverbs 17:9; Matthew 6:12, 14; Matthew 18:21-22, 35)
3. Joseph OVERCAME evil with good! He took care of them in the famine. (Romans 12:14-21)
 - Pray FOR the one who offended you. Matthew 43:44 *You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;... Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*
 - By loving God's Law, obeying His Word and being filled with His Spirit, we are promised that nothing can cause us to stumble, sin or be offended! Praise the Lord!