



The POWER of FORGIVENESS

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In many American churches, unresolved offenses and personal betrayals have become a primary weapon of the enemy, splintering congregations and causing pastoral burnout. A 2023 survey found that 72% of churches faced serious conflict, and research shows that many people leave church altogether due to offense or emotional hurt. (*Christianity Today*)

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:14 that our own forgiveness is tied to how we forgive others. Holding onto an offense only poisons us but releasing it sets us free and opens the flow of God's grace and reflects the very heart of our Father. (See Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:5, 103:10-12; Micah 7:18-19; Luke 15:20-22; Ephesians 1:7 and more)

Definition of "offense"

Unforgiveness binds you to the one who wronged you. (Ed Cole)

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 mousetrap is a perfect picture: the bait lures the victim, and once taken, the trap snaps shut. In the same way, Satan offers offenses as bait; when we take it and act on our hurt, we fall into his trap to do his will. (Matthew 18:34)
2. 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." For a deeper, extremely important study scan the code.
 - Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.*



An effective strategy for the enemy!

1. Our enemy, the devil, wages war against us, and one of his biggest weapons in the Church is **offense**. What may seem small, or even normal, becomes spiritually deadly, opening the door to bitterness and destructive behavior.
 - 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,...*
 - 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!* (Luke 17:1-4; Matthew 24:10-13)
2. A few examples where an offense led to terrible consequences.
 - Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-8 | Cain's offense led to the first murder recorded in the Bible!
 - Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50 | Joseph's brothers were offended by his dreams and sold him as a slave in Egypt. Genesis 50:19-21 records Joseph's response.

- Absalom in 2 Samuel 13-19 | Absalom's offense toward Amnon, and his father, King David, brought tremendous destruction to Israel, ultimately costing his life.

Absalom's offense (2 Samuel 13-19)

1. Absalom's life clearly shows how unresolved anger and bitterness, if left unchecked and not dealt with, mutates into vengeance and rebellion that leads to division in God's people and personal destruction. (**Hebrews 12:15**)
 - When Amnon raped Tamar, King David does nothing, and Absalom nurses a deep offense and hatred. He ultimately murders Amnon. (2 Samuel 13:1-29) His resentment alienates him from His Father and he strategizes vengeance. He wins the hearts of the people and declares himself king in Hebron! (2 Samuel 14-15) David then flees Jerusalem as Absalom takes the throne and sleeps with David's concubines! This was now a full-blown rebellion... **all from an unresolved offense!** (2 Samuel 15-18) Absalom's rebellion ends in personal destruction and national sorrow. (2 Samuel 18-19)
2. Unresolved anger, if left unchecked, turns into bitterness, vengeance, and rebellion that divide God's people and will destroy the one *with* the offense; but when we surrender our hearts to the Spirit for cleansing, God brings the seeds of revival that begins in me.

Parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

The parable of the unforgiving (offended) servant in Matthew 18 reveals the consequences for unforgiveness and acting on an offense...

1. **The offense** | Even though the servant was in great debt (billions of dollars by today's standards), he was unconditionally forgiven! However, he quickly found someone who owed him a much smaller amount but couldn't pay it back. Offended, he had him thrown in jail until the amount was paid.
2. **The consequence** | He, in turn, was handed over to the torturers! An offense will grieve the heart of God and will release torment upon OUR life, not necessarily on the one who offended us. It's like the proverbial saying that we drink the poison, expecting the other one to die!

What to do when I'm offended...

1. **Know that offenses will come!** (Matthew 18:7; Luke 17:1; Psalm 119:165) Instead of letting anger and bitterness take root, we can follow the example of Joseph, who experienced betrayal, slavery, and prison, yet **CHOSE** to forgive his brothers, "*You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good*" (Genesis 50:20).
2. We overcome offenses by **rejecting** and **replacing** every thought that opposes God's Word (Read 2 Corinthians 10:4-5), releasing vengeance to Him and trusting in His justice, and forgiving from the heart as Christ forgave us! (Matthew 18:21-22) Then, according to Matthew 5:44, **we master our offense with prayer for those who hurt us.**



Father, we realize that offense is one of the greatest weapons of the enemy against Your people. Strengthen us with discernment and power to overcome evil with good! May we be the catalyst for change through forgiveness! Send us a move of Your Holy Spirit... in *OUR* day! (*Habakkuk 3:2*)