

No Offense

Offense Taken

September 13

Introduction

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to service. Today, we are kicking off a brand new series to tackle a universal struggle that all of us face. And I'm not just talking about those in Church. Whether you're atheist or Buddhist, Left-wing or Right-wing, Apple or Android, introvert or extrovert, shoes off in the house or wrong, all of us deal with offense. (Some of you are offended already). Benjamin Franklin famously said that two things in life are certain, death and taxes. But Jesus would add a third,

"Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses should come,'"
(Luke 17:1 NKJV).

In other words, if you have a pulse and are living on God's green earth, offenses *will* come. Now we need to be careful to note that Jesus did not say it will be impossible not to be offended, He said it will be impossible that no offenses should come.

So if you were feeling optimistic about the holidays this year, hoping that your no-filter Uncle wouldn't bring up the midterm elections during Thanksgiving dinner, maybe pray a little harder.

The truth is that offense is all around us. We are living in highly offendable times. Oh haven't you heard? Offense is in. It's highly fashionable to be offended. We wear it like a badge of virtue. In fact, if you're not offended, you're not paying attention so you better get offended! Because if you're not offended, then I'm offended.

But some of us might think, "Not me! I'm laid back. Nothing bothers me." Well I came up with a little inventory to assess just how offendable we are. For each of the questions, grade yourself on a scale of 1-5. 1 being unbothered, 2 slightly bothered, 3 irritated, 4 upset, 5 offended.

1. You're driving on the road (some of you are already putting 5) and the car next to you realizes that they're in a right turn only lane and need to get over. But instead of signaling, they cut you off and don't throw a Shaka.
2. The weekend is coming so you text your friend group to see if anyone has plans. Nobody responds so you spend the weekend alone. After the weekend you're scrolling through IG and realize all your friends got together and didn't invite you.
3. You and a team collaborate on a project. But when it is presented, the other team members get praised for their efforts while your contribution is minimized or overlooked entirely.
4. You have guests coming over to the house so you and your family agree to tidy up before everyone arrives. You come home first and get to work. You're knee deep in chores when your family member texts that they got held up and won't be getting home until shortly before the guests arrive so you're left to clean alone.
5. An authority figure (boss, coach, ministry leader) announces a change that directly impacts you. You don't agree with this decision and weren't consulted beforehand. When you ask them about it they say the decision has already been made.

If you scored 5-9 you are hard to offend (or living in denial).

If you scored 10-14 you are easily annoyed (You're not hulking out but you've got triggers).

If you scored 15-19 You may be taking things more personally than you realize.

If you scored 20-23 You may not just be experiencing offense but rehearsing it and carrying it.

If you scored 24-25 Please see on of our prayer team for inner healing and deliverance. (I'm kidding, mostly).

Offense is everywhere, Jesus said it would be impossible for offenses not to come, so what's the big deal? If everyone gets offended, isn't it just a part of life? In Matthew 24, Jesus offers one of the most sobering warnings on the danger of offense. In a dialogue with His disciples, Jesus begins to describe what the end times will be like. How many of you believe we are nearing the end? Jesus says we're going to hear wars and rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, there will be famines, and natural disasters. And this is just the beginning. Then He says,

¹⁰ "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved,"

(Matthew 24:10-13 NKJV).

Before we unpack this I need to give credit where credit is due. One of the greatest teachings on offense is John Bevere's, *The Bait of Satan*. If you know that you are easily triggered, carry offense, and have a hard time releasing forgiveness, I highly recommend this book. I have found it to be a tremendous resource, both personally, and in helping others. So if you want to go deeper and are willing to be challenged in this area, pick up *The Bait of Satan*.

1. OFFENSE ROBBS OUR LOVE, WHICH THEN ROBBS OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

Now when the Bible says *many* will be offended, that word 'many' can also be understood 'mostly' or even 'altogether'. In other words, Jesus says there will come a time when offense will be so prevalent that *most* people will carry it in their daily lives. People will be altogether offended. But it won't stop with offense. Notice the progression? Offense, when not dealt with, leads to betrayal, and betrayal leads to hatred. Offense starts as a seed, but when it is allowed to germinate and take root it produces the fruit of resentment, bitterness, betrayal, anger, and ultimately hatred. And then the scariest thing of all happens, Jesus says your love grows cold.

How many of you see this? So many people walk around with offense in their heart. We see friend betray friend, spouse betray spouse, those in authority betray the ones they were entrusted to serve. Marriages and families fall apart. Churches split. People are angry. It feels like the temperature is rising. It feels like the love of many has grown cold. But here's the scariest part. Because it's easy to point the finger out there and say, "Yeah, the world is falling apart." But that's not who Jesus is talking about. When Jesus says that the love of many will grow cold, He's not talking about a friendship love or a familial love. The word He uses is *agape* love. This is a divine love given from God to the Church. It is the same unconditional love we are meant to extend to others. Jesus isn't talking about the world. He's talking to us. He's saying offense will infiltrate the Church and instead of trusting in the Holy Spirit, people will react in the flesh and turn on one another out of self-preservation. When that happens, their love for God and one another will grow cold.

This is why offense is so dangerous and must be dealt with in the love and the power of the Holy Spirit. Because if we allow offense to take root it will ultimately rob us of our love, which will destroy our relationships. It's kind of hard to come to Church and worship when you have bitterness in your heart toward someone. Especially if that person is in the room. This is why Jesus tells us, if we aren't Pono (aren't right) with a brother or sister, we should first leave our worship at the altar, make things right, and then come back and worship. Because offense robs our love, it robs our joy, and it ultimately destroys our relationships.

That is why I believe this series is so timely. God wants to teach us how to live free of offense so our love for Him can burn brightly and our love for others will not wax or wane. Next week we're going to learn how scripture says we should respond to offense when we feel justified in our anger. In other words, some offense is manini and we can let it go. Other times we get offended but we were actually in the wrong. But what happens when we truly are the victim of injustice? When we were undeservedly wronged? What do we do when we feel completely justified in our offense? The answer might offend you. But join us next week for one of the most powerful and challenging messages you'll ever hear.

But today we learned just how dangerous offense is. When we don't deal with offense in a Godly way, it will mutate into something far worse that has the ability to destroy our relationships with others and cause even our love for God to grow cold. That is why offense is one of the Devil's greatest strategies for destroying your life.

2. BEWARE OF OFFENSE: THE BAIT OF SATAN.

Again, if this message is speaking to you and you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to deal with offense in your heart, John Bever's, *The Bait of Satan* is a life-changing resource. I promise the Church doesn't get any kickbacks. I don't make any commission for any books sold. Just use my promo code at checkout for 20% off (kidding).

²⁴ "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will,"
(2 Timothy 2:24-26 NIV).

So our enemy, the Devil, lays traps for us so that he can ensnare us and take us captive to do his will. This is why Paul warns Timothy not to be quarrelsome or resentful toward those who oppose him. He is not to take offense but to bring gentle instruction so that they can be set free. But offense, quarreling, and resentment play right into the Devil's trap.

In the Bible, the Greek word for 'Offense' is, **σκάνδαλον** (skandalon). It's where we get the English word 'Scandal'. Skandalon literally means, "The movable stick or trigger of a trap". Some of you are too young for this reference but I picture Elmer Fudd trying to catch Bugs Bunny. Elmer Fudd isn't fast enough to catch Bugs Bunny. He has to rely on cunning and trickery. He has to bait Bugs Bunny into being captured. In the same way, the devil doesn't possess the ability to overpower you. The only chance he's got is to bait you, trap you, and take you captive to do his will. This is why he dangles offense in front of you like a juicy carrot. It'll feel so good to justify yourself, get even, clap back. But once you take that bait, you'll be captive to bitterness, to resentment, jealousy, and hatred. That revenge that felt good in the short run will turn to bitterness in the long run and it'll poison your soul.

Conclusion

But Pastor Mark, you don't understand what this person did to me! You don't understand the injustices I've suffered. I didn't do anything wrong and they did this to me. They turned on me for no reason. They said terrible things about me. If that's you, congratulations. You've joined the company of people like Joseph who was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, David who was hunted by Saul despite being a faithful servant, Hannah who was mocked and provoked for her inability to bear children, Mother Mary who willingly carried the labels and shame of becoming pregnant out of wedlock, all of the prophets who spoke God's truth, and Jesus Himself who was perfectly innocent yet bore scorn, shame, false accusations, wrongful imprisonment, and ultimately death. Yet each of these trusted in the hand of the Lord.

That doesn't mean they weren't hurt, it doesn't mean they weren't angry, or filled with sorrow, but they surrendered that offense to the Lord and allowed Him to fight their battles. And each one experienced God's justice, His vindication, and the blessing of the promise fulfilled. We can't always control what happens to us, but we can control what's happening in us. Offenses are inevitable but how we respond is up to us. I want to encourage you to go on a journey of being set free from the trap of offense. It will save your relationships, it will restore your joy, and your love will burn brighter than ever before.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus I ask You to search my heart. Please show me if I am holding offense against anyone. I no longer want to hold bitterness or resentment in my heart. Please help me to release all of the anger I'm holding inside. I release offense to You, I release bitterness to You, I release anger to You, and I release my need to get even to You. Forgive me for allowing offense to live in my heart.

Help me to release forgiveness to those who have hurt me. Not because what they did wasn't wrong. Not because it didn't hurt. But because I no longer want to allow offense to poison my heart. Give me the strength to forgive. Allow me to extend Your mercy. Give me the words to say the next time I see them. Guard my heart from future offense.

I pray for freedom from the trap of offense. Help me to remain in Your will. I pray that my love would not grow cold but would burn passionately with love for You and others. Restore to me the joy of my salvation! Amen.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **RECOGNIZE:** What types of situations most easily trigger offense in you? Is it rejection, criticism, disrespect, disappointment, injustice, or something else? Why do you think those situations affect you so strongly?
2. **REFLECT:** Think of a time when you were genuinely wronged. What happened and what did you do with the hurt after? Did you rehearse it, withdraw, retaliate, seek validation, hold resentment, or surrender it to God?
3. **RESPOND:** What would it look like for you to release an offense to God? Surrender doesn't mean pretending the wrong didn't happen and forgiveness doesn't mean pretending everything is fine. Is there someone you need to forgive, talk to, establish a boundary with, or simply entrust to God's justice?