

No Offense

The Best Defense Against Offense

October 4

Introduction

Hey everyone, I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to service. Today we continue our series, *No Offense*, which is based on John Bevere's, *The Bait of Satan*.

When my wife and I were dating, we bonded over all of our shared interests. We were both musical at the time and even played in a band together in high school. I recently discovered my old iPod (which has to be 20 years old now), charged it up, and let the kids listen to our music (they were not impressed, no golden buzzer, no three-chair turn-around). We bonded over our love of the ocean and would go snorkeling at Shark's Cove all Summer long. And, of course, we bonded over our love for Jesus. On our wedding day I thought to myself, "I'm marrying my soulmate, we are so alike in every way, we're like the exact same person." Everyone who has been married for some time is laughing.

Today, after nearly 15 years of marriage and research, I can confidently report that my wife and I are *not* the same person. In fact, in many ways, we're quiet the opposite. We disagree on a lot. Like which way the toilet paper roll should face. Quick show of hands, how many of you are over the falls? And how many of you are wrong, raise your hand. Early in our marriage, we even disagreed on how often we're allowed to flush the toilet. I thought it was after every use. Apparently, I was wrong. Quick show of hands (I'm kidding). But probably one of the most glaring differences, and the source of many of our disagreements, is that I am often lead by my head and she is often lead by her heart. She's like a Disney Princess. She sees an animal or child in need and immediately rushes to their aid. I'm on the side thinking, "Don't touch that, it might have rabies!" (The child, not the animal).

True story (One I'm not proud of), a couple of years ago we wanted the kids to experience a white Christmas so we took them up to Washington. And the kids were sledding down a pretty steep hill on a toboggan and there were these guard posts along the side to make sure they didn't go off course. But one time Judah went down the hill and slowly started veering toward the guard rails before colliding into one at the bottom. And my wife and I were standing at the top of the hill watching and she immediately started yelling at me to go down and check on him. Meanwhile, I was just standing there thinking, "Well, let's see if he gets up. He might be ok. Oh, he's still lying there? Ok, yeah I better go check on him." It took my 3 business days for my head to respond. Head vs. Heart. (For the record, he was ok but that's not the point).

Another time, my wife had arranged for the kids to bunny-sit a couple of dwarf rabbits from a very sweet family in our Church. I show up to Youth group one night and I see this giant bunny cage being loaded into the back of our car. I pulled my wife aside and said, "Honey, what is happening?" And she said, "Oh we're just bunny-sitting for *a couple of days*" (Foreshadow, it would be longer than that). Now, the kids had a blast but it was also complete chaos. Our house was a zoo. There were pellets and bedding everywhere, they were hopping on all of the furniture, and you never forget that smell. And the whole time my wife was *surprised* by all of it! She kept saying, "Oh, I didn't realize how messy they were" or "Oh, I didn't realize how smelly they were." And I was thinking, "Yeah, they're animals!" But you put bunnies and children together and my wife just throws out all reason.

And there have been many times when I've become so exasperated like, "If only my wife would think these things through," and I know there have been *many* times when my wife has thought, "Stop overthinking! This one is a no-brainer, the kids need to eat, it's dinner time."

Maybe some of you can relate to my wife. You see a need or an opportunity and you follow your heart. Forget the details, we'll figure it out as we go! But maybe others of you are like me. You need to plan and prepare and run a cost-benefit analysis and an ROI before you tie your shoes. Well like I said, this had become such a source of frustration, and disagreement, and offense in our home that I finally cried out to God one morning and I said, "Lord, I want to settle this once and for all! Which was Jesus? Was He a head guy or a heart guy?" And you want to know what I heard? I heard the Lord tell me, "He was neither. Jesus wasn't led by His heart or His head, He was led by My Spirit."

1. WHEN IT COMES TO OFFENSE, DON'T REACT WITH YOUR HEAD OR YOUR HEART, RESPOND IN THE SPIRIT.

This is actually true of every area of your life, whether it's marriage or finances, but it is especially true of how we respond to offense. Because here's the truth, when offenses come, we often react in a way that feels right or makes sense. But the Bible says we should never trust in our own feelings or logic.

"The human heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

That word for deceitful is interesting. It literally means sly and insidious but figuratively we get a picture of a path that is deceptively steep and slippery. One time a group of us went hiking and as we're walking up to the trailhead you could see the whole mountain. You could even make out the trail that went all the way to the top. And from afar it's easy to be lulled into a false sense of security. "That's not so bad! I can see the top!" But when you're actually on it, you realize it's much steeper than you thought, there are loose rocks, you're losing your footing, and in some cases, it can even be treacherous. What looked good from far, is far from good. And that's how the Bible describes our heart. From afar everything looks good. We convince ourselves and others we're ok and that everything is fine. The world cheers us on from the sidelines saying, "Follow your heart! Search your heart! Be true to your heart!" But the Bible says, "No! The heart is a steep and slippery path!" It is incurably sick and beyond our understanding. It looks good from far but is far from good. The heart is a terrible judge of what's right. Our hearts are biased, prejudiced, partial, and hypocritical. We judge ourselves on our intentions but everyone else on their actions. Do not let your heart control you, it is deceitful and unknowing. The Bible says not to trust your heart but it also warns us repeatedly not to trust in our own understanding.

All throughout the wisdom literature of scripture we're told repeatedly,

"Lean not on your own understanding," (Proverbs 3:5)

"Those who trust in themselves are fools," (Proverbs 28:26)

And one that I need to hear time and time again,

"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death," (Proverbs 16:25).

Sometimes we 'head' people like to pride ourselves that we're not emotionally driven. We're logical, we're reasonable, we're calculated. But God is sitting up in heaven saying, "Your calculations are way off! Just as following your heart will lead you into a ditch, so will following your head if you let it!" "Yea but God, I've crunched the numbers, I've connected the dots, I see the big picture!" And God's saying, "You see nothing! You understand nothing! Trust in Me, lean on Me, follow Me. I see everything."

We see only the surface, God sees what lies beneath. We see only a mile, God can see to the end. This is why we read of Jesus,

“Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does,”
(John 5:19).

“By Myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me,” (John 5:30).

Jesus did not act on His own accord, He followed the leading of the Spirit. Jesus did not seek His own self-interest but only the will of the Father. And as you read the gospels, it becomes apparently clear that Jesus is marching to the beat of a different drum. He isn't lead by His head or His heart.

For example, in the gospel of John Jesus hears that His dear friend Lazarus is terminally ill. If you or I heard that a dear loved one was on their deathbed we would drop everything to be with them. This could be it. If Jesus were led by His heart He would've done that. The story says that He loved Lazarus and Lazarus' sisters so He would've dropped everything immediately and rushed to be with them. But that's not what Jesus does. The Bible says He actually waits two more days before going to see them and during those two days Lazarus dies. But Jesus, who is led by the Spirit, knows that God has a plan. As they're on the way He tells the disciples,

“Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe,”
(John 11:14-15).

Jesus knew that Lazarus was going to die. His heart may have been screaming, “GO!” But the Spirit said wait. So Jesus waited on the Lord. And there are so many times Jesus does what many of us would consider illogical. Many times Jesus' ministry was growing and then He would withdraw to an isolated place away from the crowds. Or He would say something that would offend everyone and they would leave. The people wanted to crown Him King and Jesus refused. He went into Jerusalem knowing they were going to kill Him. They falsely accused Him but He didn't correct them. And when you look at the life of Jesus, one things becomes apparently clear,

2. FOLLOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT WON'T ALWAYS FEEL GOOD OR MAKE SENSE.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want,” (Galatians 5:16-17).

This truth is going to be essential for the rest of our series. Because when we get offended we immediately want to react in a way that feels right or makes sense. This is called the flesh. Again, this is also true for much of life. Anytime we're faced with a decision, we want to make a choice that feels good or makes sense. When it comes to spending our money we want to spend it in a way that feels good and makes sense. When it comes to reacting to offense we're driven by our feelings or what makes sense. If you're more driven by your heart you might lash out, explode, or have an emotional meltdown. But it's the 'head' people you gotta watch out for. Because when 'head' people get offended we have a saying, “Don't get mad, get even.”

You won't see us explode or erupt but we're scheming behind the scenes and when the time is right, payback is a dish best served cold. Please don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying we need to go through life emotionless and irrational, but I am saying we cannot be governed by our emotions or our limited understanding. We cannot live according to the flesh. We need to be a people who are anchored to God's Word and led by His Spirit.

In the weeks to come we're going to talk about how scripture says we are called to respond to offense, give forgiveness, and contend for reconciliation. Spoiler alert: None of it feels good or makes sense. Our natural reaction to offense is not to bless the person who hurt us, lay down our right to be offended, and pray blessing over them. But these are just a few of the ways scripture says we should respond. And as long as we let our emotions or our human understanding be the driver, we will never respond in the way God desires. When Jesus comes into our life we don't put Him in the trunk like our jumper cables and only pull Him out in case of emergency. We don't put Jesus in the backseat of our lives so that He's in the car but just a spectator. We don't even put Jesus in the passenger seat like our friend or buddy who keeps us company on the journey of life. No, when Jesus enters the car we hand Him the keys and we say, "Lord, You drive. Even if it's scary, even if it doesn't make sense, even if you take me where I don't want to go, I know Your way is best. I'm done driving. My wisdom and my understanding led me straight into a ditch. I no longer trust in my own sense of direction, I need You."

Conclusion

When I was a brand new Pastor in the ministry I had to grow out of my own carnality and learn to trust in the Holy Spirit. Looking back, I realize I was a very carnal-minded leader. My solution to people who offended me or challenged me was to just remove them. I wouldn't lash out emotionally, I wouldn't scream at people, but I would just remove them. It felt right and it made sense.

There were several people in ministries that I oversaw that, for whatever reason, we just didn't see eye-to-eye, and I really believed the best solution was just to remove them from the team. And there were a number of people who left the Church because I told them they couldn't serve anymore. But thankfully, there were some more mature and seasoned Pastors like P Earl and P Theresa who helped to contend for reconciliation and restoration. It wasn't always comfortable, it didn't always feel good, but today God has restored many of those relationships and we continue to serve alongside one another 15 years later in genuine love and oneness. Had we just done what felt right and made sense in the moment I don't think those relationships would have survived. But through the power community, accountability, and the Holy Spirit, those relationships are stronger than ever and what the enemy meant for evil God intended for good.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Are you more of a 'head' person or a 'heart' person? When it comes to offense, do you often find yourself reacting more with your head or your heart?
2. Has there been a time when the Holy Spirit or a verse in scripture instructed you to do something that didn't "feel good" or "make sense" to you? What was the outcome?
3. What are some ways we can grow in trusting in the Holy Spirit and not following our heart or leaning on our own understanding?