



Living

UNOFFENDABLE



T I D B I T S

about being offended:

Offended: resentful or annoyed, typically as a result of a perceived insult; to cause to be upset or to hurt the feelings of someone, esp. by being rude or showing a lack of respect

* FORFEITING OUR RIGHT TO BE ANGRY

* We don't even have a right to be angry when we zoom out and reflect on all that we have been forgiven from; we are called to forgive

* God is the perfect Judge because He has never sinned. **WE CAN TRUST HIM TO JUDGE**

* Most of the time **IT DOESN'T HAVE TO DO WITH US**

* We are normally in the wrong place in the wrong time

* **WE SEEM TO THRIVE OFF OF BEING OFFENDED** so we can feel self-righteous

* **JESUS SAYS FORGIVE THEM** they don't know what they are doing

* Do we really know the person and what they are going through?

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart." 1 Cor. 4:3-5

* We don't know anyone's motives, not even our own.

* We don't know the backstory

* God knows others and ours motives and we don't

* We need to **ADJUST OUR EXPECTATIONS** to fit human nature: people will fail us but the Lord will not

* We say "I can't believe..." but really are we going to live in perpetual shock about the nature of man? (war, affair, stealing, rude etc)

* Let's not be shocked

* Proverbs 18:17 reminds us that life is full of conflict, disputes, and we always listen to our side first and we can't trust our own motives and heart. We can't trust ourselves in our judgment of others (we don't know their background, history, what they are going through). Makes us so much more at peace when we let that go

* Anger is extraordinarily easy. It's our default setting. Love is very difficult. Love is a miracle. Today There's an article in *Inc.* magazine about anger and Martin Luther King Jr. The author quoted King's autobiography, where he wrote, "You must not harbor anger." But that's not all. "Even when attacked," wrote King, "we should love our enemies."

* We should treat everyone the same b/c we are free to love them

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on you're anger, and give no opportunity to the devil"
Eph. 4:26-27

You may believe you are doing right, but the Lord will judge your reasons.

Proverbs 16:2

10 REASONS

to be an unoffendable person

- * Unoffendable people **HAVE MORE FREE TIME**
- * Unoffendable people are **WELL RESTED**
- * Unoffendable people have **BETTER RELATIONSHIPS**
- * Unoffendable people **TRUST GOD** to avenge them
- * Unoffendable people **LOVE GOD'S WORD**
- * Unoffendable people **ARE COMPASSIONATE**
- * Unoffendable people **ARE CREATIVE**
- * Unoffendable people **HAVE BETTER PRAYER TIMES**
- * Unoffendable people **ARE A WITNESS TO A LOST WORLD**
- * Unoffendable people **ARE HAPPY**

NOT STAYING OFFENDED

The strategy of the enemy is to put distance between us and the people we love the most, one offense at a time. **Being unoffendable isn't about never getting offended. It's about not staying offended.**

"Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends"

PROVERBS 17:9

"The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit"

PROVERBS 18:21

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone"

COLOSSIANS 4:6

Oftentimes it is far easier to heal a broken bone than it is to heal the wound caused by something someone said that deeply offended us. One of the top killers of our happiness is an offense. One offense has the ability to ruin your whole day, week, month, year, or even life.

Regardless of our age, wealth, career, relationship status, or spiritual maturity, no one is exempt from offenses. Part of our human nature lies in wanting other humans to think highly of us. We want to be desired by the opposite sex. We want people to think we are good looking, wealthy, and

ultimately happy. We want people to think we have it all together, living in a constant state of success.

We have all had a moment where somebody said something that made us feel unappreciated, insignificant, and undervalued.

Maybe it was a racial slur. Maybe it was a sexist remark. Maybe it was a Facebook comment. Maybe it was someone being chosen over you. Sometimes we're offended not because of something someone said or did to us, but because of something someone said or did to a person we love. Under the umbrella of being a good friend, we'll become offended on behalf of other people. But what if I told you that you could live a life where you were unoffendable?

Not invincible.

Not Superman.

Not Wonder Woman.

No, you'll certainly bleed. But what if I told you your pain could have a purpose? What if you could hear an offense and actually know what to do with it?

One of the first steps to being unoffendable is realizing that **WE, OURSELVES, HAVE A LARGE CAPACITY TO DO A LOT OF OFFENDING**. It's an underrated defense mechanism.

Most of us seldom criticize others out loud, but privately, merely diminishing someone else's success makes us feel better about our own shortcomings. It's as though another person's things, careers, and relationships are in direct competition with our things, our careers, and our relationships. But as long as we see our friends and their lives as secret competition, we will always incidentally offend other people because we find it so stinking hard to just be happy for them. It's amazing that people can spend an hour on social media and internally criticize what everyone else is posting.

REMEMBER THIS: YOU WILL REAP WHAT YOU SOW.

LIFE IS NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU RECEIVE. LIFE IS ALL ABOUT WHAT YOU GIVE.

I decided, a long time ago, I want to be known as a cheerleader for my family, friends, and the people I love the most. The life of a fan is so much more enjoyable than the life of a hater. When I began intentionally celebrating other people, I actually found myself becoming less offended and less offending.

GENUINE CELEBRATION OF ANOTHER PERSON'S SUCCESS DISARMS THE TRAP OF COMPARISON.

There are a lot of people who have offended you, and they don't even know they have.

On the other hand, you have offended other people and they simply have yet to tell you.

You will not be able to control all of the people who will offend you in your lifetime, but you can be intentional with your part in the conversations you have with other people. Make a decision today that the goal of your future conversations and interactions will be to bring out the best in other people.

- * Point out the greatness in a friend.
- * Tell someone what they are good at; they may have forgotten or not realized it yet.
- * Go through their social media account and like a few of their posts. Write a kind comment on it. It's not to be fake. It's to be intentional.

If we're honest, it's not difficult to criticize anything or anybody. It almost comes naturally to us. But what if we all chose to be better than that? For us to bring out the best in others in our conversations, we have to actually be looking for the best.

We often feel as though we are missing the mark because we give other people's opinion of us the governing vote on how we are doing in life. If we can somehow get people to "like" our highlights on the Internet, then we can fool ourselves into believing they like our whole life.

If we can get friends and strangers on the Internet to love where we vacation, then we feel as though we are somebody special for 24 hours until another one of our friends posts a better vacation spot. Inevitably, we continue to hand the measuring stick of success to other people, some of whom we don't even know and will never talk to. The only way to stop caring about what people think of you is by giving the measuring stick to God.

I believe Jesus gives us a phenomenal way to measure our lives. He does so by describing the Kingdom of God using a parable in Matthew 25.

In this parable, Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a manager who gave to his servants "each according to his ability." Here's why this is really good news for you and me: It means we never have to compare what we have received with what anyone else has. **IT MEANS WHATEVER YOU WERE GIVEN IS EXACTLY WHAT GOD THINKS YOU CAN BE TRUSTED WITH AT THIS TIME IN YOUR LIFE.**

- * You might want a spouse. How do you treat your family, friends and current relationships God has already given you?
- * You might want more money. How are you stewarding what you already have?

We could easily measure our success or failure by our education or lack thereof, bank account, job title, relationship status, or social media followers, but God isn't measuring your life by any of those standards. He's measuring your life by seeing what you can be trusted with.

Accepting this truth frees you from being offended by people who don't think you're being or doing enough. Don't believe the lie that you will be good enough if and when you have a higher degree, six figures in the bank, CEO on the business card, happily married, or averaging 100 likes per post. Strangers on the Internet don't get to decide if you are a success or a failure. God does.

When it comes to some of our closest relationships, I believe there are times when what we find offensive and destructive can actually be beneficial and constructive. If we are going to have successful careers, marriages, and lives, we must learn how to receive the truth without being offended by it.

Proverbs 27 says this:

"WOUNDS FROM A FRIEND CAN BE TRUSTED, BUT AN ENEMY MULTIPLIES KISSES."

PROVERBS 27:6 (NIV)

The best way to receive honest feedback is by invitation-only. When criticism is uninvited, you will always be an open target to being offended. So one of the questions I often ask friends is this:

- * What are some of my blind spots?
- * Who exists in your life that can tell you the truth?

It's one thing to be offended by a harsh remark made by someone you love. But the biggest offenses some of us will have in our lives will actually come from two surprising places:

- * What people never say to you and
- * What you hear people say to others that you wish was said to you.

The greatest test for your confidence is to hear somebody else being complimented on the same thing you do. It can be hard to see somebody else being adored, noticed, recognized, and rewarded for something you do a lot of and they do very little of. I call this phantom discouragement. No one actually said anything negative about you. But watching someone else being paid a compliment can feel as though it cost you something.

Saul dealt with this at the highest level when he heard women singing the praises of David in 1 Samuel 18. And The Bible tells us that Saul eyed David from that day on.

Saul allowed the praise of David to become the demise of his own confidence. Saul let what he wanted to hear being sung about him, drive him away from who he was called to be. He was already amazing, anointed, and the most handsome man in Israel, according to 1 Samuel 9. But he was blinded to his own worth because of his jealousy of David.

IS IT FEASIBLE THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE WHO LOVE YOU AND COMPLIMENT YOU ALL THE TIME AND YOU DON'T EVEN HEAR IT BECAUSE YOU ARE WAITING TO GET A COMPLIMENT FROM ONE SPECIFIC PERSON YOU WILL NEVER HEAR IT FROM?

Sometimes we not only want to be encouraged, but we want to be encouraged by someone specific. Let me ask you something.

- * What is going to change when they notice who you are and who you've been?
- * What is going to change when they apologize?
- * What is going to change when you finally get what you want?
- * If there is a better version of yourself you envision becoming once you receive affirmation, then my next question for you is this: **Why wait?**
- * Why not just forgive them now and let it go?
- * Why would you want to live your life with a backpack full of offenses when you could be putting energy toward who you would be if you weren't offended?

The best thing I have learned to do with offenses is this: Let them go before they happen. And this is why...

"MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR EACH OTHER'S FAULTS, AND FORGIVE ANYONE WHO OFFENDS YOU. REMEMBER, THE LORD FORGAVE YOU, SO YOU MUST FORGIVE OTHERS."
COLOSSIANS 3:13 (NLT)

I love the first two words. Make allowance.

Give margin. Provide leeway. Leave a gap. Create space.

The Bible is telling us to create a space in our life and in our world for other people to make mistakes. This means everyone in your life and in your world who offends you, must be let off the hook. Not should be. **MUST** be. Everyone. Leave some margin for the errors of other people in your life to make mistakes because God has done the same for you. While hurtful actions may offend you, don't let a one-time offense cause you a lifetime of pain.

LET IT GO. AND MOVE ON WITH YOUR LIFE.

When we were at our worst, Christ gave up his perfect life for our flawed ones. He has already made up His mind. He has not only forgiven our past mistakes, but our future ones too.

Your greatest opportunity to be like Jesus is when you are being offended. If you could see the full picture of what the person who has offended you has been through, you would understand what they said to you has very little to do with you and a lot more to do with the brokenness they have experienced from somebody else. This is why we have to make allowance for each other's faults because if not, we only respond emotionally with a limited perspective on their life and ours.

- Forgive them.
 - Forgive dad.
 - Forgive mom.
 - Forgive the teacher.
 - Forgive the ex boyfriend.
 - Forgive the ex girlfriend.
 - Forgive the ex spouse.
 - Forgive the current one.
 - Forgive your sibling.
- Forgive your old boss.
 - Forgive your old friend.
 - Forgive the coach.
 - Forgive your last pastor.
 - Forgive the person who used a racial slur.
 - Forgive the police.
 - Forgive the government.
 - Forgive a President.

Let it go. Let it go. Let it go. Give all of the above the allowance of grace extended to your life by an Almighty God.

WHO DO YOU NEED MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR?

I want you to allow God to free you from all the moments where no one encouraged you. I want you to allow God to free you from all the things that have been said to you, and all the things not said enough to you. Holding on to that offense, that pain, is ruining your future.

One of the ways we become free from offense is by taking the initiative in becoming the type of person you want others to be for you. If you have been longing to be encouraged, noticed, and appreciated—then go find somebody who is discouraged, unnoticed, and unappreciated and be everything to them that you have always longed to have for yourself.

Choose to encourage others like crazy. Highlight the small, wonderful details about them. Appreciate what others bring to the table. There may be unresolved tension between you and someone you love all because you feel unnoticed, unappreciated, and undervalued by them. Stop allowing offense to put a wedge between you and those you love. Do your part. Notice them. Appreciate them. Value them. **WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T LIVE ANOTHER DAY OF YOUR LIFE STIFLED BY THE POISON OF OFFENSE.**

How can I learn to not take offense at

LITTLE THINGS?

Trying to not take offense is like trying to not think about elephants. If someone says, "Don't think about elephants," we automatically think about them. If we focus on trying not to take offense, we will keep thinking about the offense. This principle applies to just about any sin a person can commit. When we focus on a behavior, even in an attempt to eliminate it, the result is more of that behavior. This is just how our minds work. Thankfully, there is another, better way to address this problem.

To eliminate a bad behavior, we must first discover the desire behind it.

People are lured and enticed into sin as a result of desire—wanting is the beginning of sinning (James 1:14). Every sin or bad behavior begins with desire. Desire itself is not bad; there are many good desires. But the desires that lead to sin are wrong desires, the desires based in false perspectives and misplaced expectations about others and ourselves. **TO ELIMINATE A BAD BEHAVIOR, WE MUST FIRST DISCOVER THE DESIRE BEHIND IT.**

For many people, the tendency to take offense at little things is rooted in a false perspective of security. We all desire security and safety; we desire the good opinion of others. We secure those good opinions with performance: what we do, how we speak, how we dress, how we express ourselves, etc. When our security is based on our performance, we may feel threatened when someone expresses something negative about us. The natural response to that threat is to take offense or become angry. Even a casual, flippant, or offhand remark can gnaw at us and steal our peace. The way to prevent taking offense is to address our desire for security. As long as feelings of security are rooted in ourselves, the tendency to take offense, even at the little things, will exist. If, however, our feelings of security are not rooted in ourselves or our performance, our perspective will change and our response to the actions and comments of others will become more balanced.

Remember the acronym **COP**.

- * **COVER.** Twice in the book of Proverbs, we are told to "cover" offenses (Proverbs 10:12; 17:9). The covering of offense is related to love. First Peter 4:8 says, "Love covers over a multitude of sins"—and that "multitude" would have to include small slights. In any relationship, there are many irksome things that should just be "covered" for the sake of love. By covering an offense, or not revealing it to others, we are empathizing with the offender and extending the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he did not mean what he said; perhaps we misunderstood. Perhaps the offender was having a bad day or wasn't thinking straight. Covering the offense of another helps us, too. Remember the elephant? When we focus on the needs of the person who offended us, we no longer think about how offended we feel.
- * **OVERLOOK.** "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). Forgiveness is an honorable thing. When you cover an offense, you give grace and empathy to the offender. When you overlook an offense, you choose to give

*"Love covers over a multitude of sins..."
1 Peter 4:8*

something valuable to yourself—the reminder that your security is not based on others' opinions of you but on the security you have in Christ (see Ephesians 1:5-7).

* **PRAY.** Jesus told His disciples on multiple occasions that if they prayed for anything in His name (or, according to His will) they would have what they asked for. Do you believe that God wants you to be angry with others, or forgiving of them? Do you believe that your security is in Him, rather than in yourself? If you pray consistently, asking Him to help you not take offense, He will answer that prayer. If you ask Him to remind you of His secure and steadfast love, He will answer that prayer. You can confidently pray for help in every offending situation (Hebrews 4:16).

In Bethany, as Jesus was reclining at a table, a woman entered the room with an alabaster jar of fine perfume. The woman broke the container and anointed Jesus' head with the fragrant ointment (Mark 14:3). Immediately, she was criticized; in fact, "they rebuked her harshly" (verses 4-5). The woman could have taken offense at their words. It would have been natural for her to react in kind. But she didn't have to. Jesus came to her defense: "Leave her alone" (verse 6). The woman's love of Christ and her meek response to an offense were honored, and "wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (verse 9).

To sum up, when we take offense, it is because someone has hurt us or frightened us. God has given us two ways to deal with the offense.

- * First, by remembering that the other person also has things that hurt and frighten him. When we love the offender and focus on his needs (*cover* and *overlook*), we will no longer notice the offense.
- * Second, by remembering that, when we belong to Christ, we are fundamentally secure in Him; we do not need to react and defend ourselves, because He has promised to defend us (Isaiah 35:3-4).

When we struggle to trust Him or to believe that we are secure in Him, all we need to do is pray for the strength to do so, and we know that He will answer (John 14:13-14).

HOW TO CHOOSE

to Not be Offended

DO YOU ALLOW WHAT HAPPENED TO CONTROL HOW YOU FEEL?

Maybe we are one to let those feelings simmer and stew poisoning us from the inside out. Or are we the type to obsess about the offense over and over like a moth circling a light? However we react, the choice is always ours.

1. DON'T "TAKE" OFFENSE

"Take" is defined as a voluntary action to grab, hold, or grip something. It goes back to choice. We can decide not to "take" offense. Let the opportunity to grab on to those feelings pass by you.

2. CHANGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Sometimes we are in the wrong place at the wrong time and a person word vomits on you. This typically has nothing to do with you and it has everything to do with that person and a hard season they are in. We need to trust the Lord who knows their motives, heart, situation and mind to handle the situation and not welcome those words into our heart. We need to remember that people will fail us but that the Lord will not.

3. DON'T LET PRIDE CLOUD YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Our natural tendency is to believe our assumptions and way of thinking are correct, but don't allow your pride to burn bridges just because someone points out an imperfection. Sometimes we are the problem.

4. THE GOLDEN RULE

What about the times you offend someone? Just like the golden rule. We can react to others in the same way we would like to be treated. I feel grateful when someone graciously lets go of my offhand comment or thoughtless remark and chooses to treat me kindly. Having experienced both sides of an offense, wouldn't you rather be the one who reacts in a gracious, more gentle way?

5. DON'T LET OTHERS DEFINE YOU

Seeking approval or acceptance from others is a weak foundation for building our worth. When we compare ourselves to others, we are putting our weaknesses up against their strengths. Our self-worth should not be dependent on what someone thinks or says.

6. FORGIVE

The most perfect example of forgiving is our Savior. As he hung on the cross, he prayed: "forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34).

It is by grace that we can be forgiven of our sins, and it is the same enabling power that helps us forgive, let go, and move on. Accept the past, but leave it where it belongs.

7. DO IT FOR YOUR HEALTH

The science behind harboring anger and resentment proves to be unhealthy on so many levels. Increased incidences of depression, unhappiness, and higher mortality rates are just a few of the side effects of refusing to let go of an offense and forgive.

WHAT TO DO

when your offended

The gate into our backyard has been slowly breaking for years. At first, it just needed an extra shake to get open but now we have to keep it tied with a rope at the top so it will stay closed. John has made it work over the years, but something is weird with the design and it keeps needing more than we have to give it.

I pull the gate closed, put the rope back in place, and walk inside to do the dishes, only to discover the sink was clogged and the water won't go down.

My favorite jeans have a hole (and not the kind you want) but I wear them anyway because every other option is dirty. When I finally sit at my desk to do some work, as soon as I meet one deadline, three more show up in my inbox.

I read an email and someone is disappointed with me. In a conversation, a friend says some things that feel dismissive of me and my situation. Later I'm sitting in a group and leave feeling like an idiot for no particular reason but also for lots of reasons I can't quite articulate.

From the girl who didn't mean anything by it when she inadvertently insulted you, to the child who needs you at the most inconvenient times.

From the woman at the grocery store who looks at you funny because you give your kid two of those free cookies they offer in the bakery area all the way to the Maker of the Universe who invites us simply to come away for a while in the midst of all we have to do.

DEFENDING YOURSELF CAN BECOME A FULL-TIME JOB, ONE THAT TAKES UP BRAIN-SPACE AT WORK, IN YOUR CAR, ON THE WEEKENDS, AT THE GROCERY STORE.

You may find yourself explaining the actions of this ungracious person to your spouse, your best friend, your sister, your mom or anyone else who will listen. I only know this because I have done this. A skill we all come by naturally is our remarkable ability to take offense. It's quite impressive if you think about it.

In the broad scope of life, these annoyances are minor, but that doesn't mean they have no impact. It's true, we live as resurrection people after the blessed reminder of Easter. But in our actual life, we often never really let go of the shadow of Lent.

One cause of decision fatigue I see is not necessarily a result of having a massive amount of important decisions to make. It can be that, but many times instead, decision fatigue comes when we refuse to acknowledge the weight of the small hurts, annoyances, dismissals, and offenses we carry around all day, every day.

When we are confronted with the necessary task of having to make a decision about our work, our home, our schedule, or on behalf of other people, we don't have the energy or motivation to care. We're offended when we're hurt. We're offended when they misunderstand. We're offended when they don't acknowledge our feelings. And when we are offended, one of two things may happen.

- * One, we feel dumb for feeling offended so we deny the offense on the outside but still stew on the inside.
- * Or two, we feel justified for feeling offended so we lash out, hide out, or design a passive-aggressive version of both.

I'm not issuing an invitation to wallow in our offenses. But what if we agreed to face them, admit them, and quickly let them go.

Dallas Willard says whenever we become angry it's because we believe our kingdom just got invaded. But the good kind of anger is when God's kingdom is invaded. This is the offense to pay attention to.

I'm not saying there is never a time to take offense. I'm also not saying we aren't allowed to feel hurt, violated, or dismissed. We are allowed to, of course, we are.

I AM SAYING IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE YOU COULD CHOOSE NOT TO TAKE OFFENSE. WHERE JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE OFFERS AN OFFENSE IN YOUR DIRECTION DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT.

The most important decision you make today could be to decide to not perseverate over that conversation, that weird look, that dismissive behavior. What if you took the word, the glance, the insult intended or unintended and instead of carrying it around, what if you looked at it, acknowledged it, and set it down instead?

WHAT IF WE DARED TO REMAIN DELIGHTFULLY UN-OFFENDED?

I'm not saying this is easy. I am saying it's interesting.

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| * Take action. | * Remember who you are. | * Don't take offense. |
| * Set boundaries. | * Keep a light heart. | |
| * Remain grounded. | * Extend grace. | |

Jesus promises his grace is sufficient. He promises in our weakness his power is made perfect. So when schedules get full, when patience runs low, when the opportunity for misunderstandings run as high as the sky, stay close to your friend Jesus who had every right to take offense, but chose love instead. Instead of turning his back, he turned toward. Instead of lashing out, he leaned in.

The truth is death doesn't always look like a tragedy. Sometimes death is a slowly dripping faucet. And even though these things can't be compared to real danger or true poverty, disappointment and weariness can drip the life right out. Slow. Quiet. Drip.

The life of Christ was a one-way road to death. It's been said *Jesus died so I didn't have to*. The truth is, *Jesus died and so did I*. Jesus didn't stay dead. And neither do we.

When we are offended, it can feel like dying a little bit on the inside. But let the dying moments remind us where to find the living.

BEING OFFENDED TAKES ENERGY. STAYING OFFENDED IS A FULL-TIME JOB.

But this is energy you need to do your good and beautiful work, to love the people you are called to love, to move through the world as the person you most deeply are and to live your one life well.

“Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life - even though invisible to spectators - is with Christ in God. He is your life.” - Colossians 3:3

Here is the place where the ordinary peers through the glass dimly, where even though I stand alone in my kitchen or sit waiting on the phone or stretch out on top of the covers, or sit behind the steering wheel, I can be there at the cross. Because even though I am offended, I do not have to take offense.

Instead of standing up tall and tensing my shoulders, I can bow down low and remember I have died. And in that quiet, lowly place, I see a small blade, green and strong, born from the death of a seed. And life shoots up from broken earth carrying truth, joy, and freedom because if I have died, then what have I to fear?

AND SO FROM DEATH LIKE CHRIST, I LIVE.

Here's the thing, these words may not resonate with you right now. But maybe next week or next month or tomorrow, when the way she speaks to you is so shocking it makes your eyes cross, when the kids disrespect you so blatantly you can't stand up straight, when your boss blames you for that thing you had nothing to do with, maybe you will remember these words.

This is what it feels like to die. And it hurts and is painful and doesn't seem to have a point. Maybe it won't have a point unless you demand it does, unless you insist on squeezing the death out of the moment until the life shows up, be it through gratitude, acceptance, belief and a refusal to take offense.

DON'T ALLOW SOMEONE ELSE'S DYSFUNCTION TO POKE YOURS AWAKE.

If you feel worn out or a little teary, if the fog of doubt and the shadow of anxiety lingers too close by today, if the burden of defending yourself has proven to be too much for you, take heart. There is another option.

In the midst of the rubble and heartache of everyday life, I hope you'll pause with me to find the quiet path of hope.

What if we remained so stubbornly close to Christ that it became impossible to offend us?

May the love of the Father, the power of the Son, and the protection of the Holy Spirit be with you now as you simply do your next right thing in love.

HOW DO I KNOW?

when to cover an offense and when to confront another's sin

With Permission from Northway Church - Steps, Lesson 11: Forgiving & Reconciling

One of the main questions asked when considering Scripture's teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation in relationships is, "When do I cover an offense with love, and when do I confront sin in another person?"

The answers to these questions are not entirely clear based on a surface reading of relevant Bible passages. Some texts instruct us to cover or overlook another's sin: "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). Others teach us to rebuke, or confront someone: "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). How are we to make sense of these seemingly contradictory statements?

It may first help to consider how God relates to us. The Bible teaches us that God is patient with us, forbearing with our sinfulness so that he might demonstrate his mercy in Christ to us and to others. In 1 Timothy 1:12-16, the Apostle Paul speaks of such mercy despite his former life of rebellion and opposition to God:

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. **But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." [Emphasis added]

How does God's grace to us then inform the way we relate to others when possibly sinned against? While not exhaustive, the following principles describe when it may be best to cover an offense in love, and when confrontation may be necessary.

WHEN TO COVER AN OFFENSE IN LOVE

WHEN THE PERSON'S MOTIVATIONS CANNOT BE EASILY DISCERNED.

Many times in conflict we struggle with assuming another person's motivation. We think we know what they intend by their words and actions, and we act in accordance with our assumptions.

However, because our hearts can and often are deceived, such an approach can lead us astray, only furthering the conflict we are experiencing with that person. Instead of accurately assessing the person's motivation, we instead respond through the lens of our

own perceptions, which are in turn informed by what we value and cherish (even the things we sinfully desire or idolize in our heart).

In contrast, in moments when we cannot easily discern a person's motivation, covering a perceived offense can be a remarkable way to model biblical love. We can strive for patience, kindness, humility, forbearance and grace. Consider the description of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

If you cannot truly discern or you are unsure of a person's motivations, seek to cover their offense with love wherever possible. Extend grace, wait with patience, pray for insight and understanding, and strive to love the other person as Christ does.

WHEN IT MAY BE APPARENT THAT OTHER FACTORS (I.E. PHYSIOLOGICAL ISSUES, SUFFERING, CIRCUMSTANCES) ARE INFORMING THE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR.

In addition to times when we are unsure of another's motivations, it can often be the case in conflict that certain influences and factors are informing the other person's heart and behavior. While it is true that Scripture teaches that a person's behavior flows from their hearts (Proverbs 4:23), God's Word also demonstrates the ways our circumstances can inform our responses as well (2 Corinthians 1:9). In such circumstances, there is wisdom in covering an offense with love as we patiently seek to understand the other person and their troubles (Proverbs 18:13).

For example, a person may be struggling with illness, with accompanying fatigue and weakness. Because our bodies can exercise an influence on our spiritual hearts, such conditions can and sometimes do impact the way we speak or act. While not excusing such behavior, we can walk alongside someone in such circumstances with patience as they wrestle with the impact of their physical bodies.

People can also be influenced by their suffering or other difficult circumstances, which can be expressed not only in grief, but also through anger, impatience, bitterness, or despair. In the same way, while we certainly want to encourage people toward faithfulness, there is wisdom and love in bearing with someone as they suffer or endure difficulty, rather than seeking to highlight every misstep we believe they are making. Instead of viewing such an individual as an enemy, we can grow to see them as family, coming alongside them in love so that we might help bear their burdens, and in so doing pointing them to the love of Jesus (Galatians 6:2).

WHEN TO CONFRONT ANOTHER'S SIN

The two above principles address when it may be appropriate to cover another's offense in love. As challenging as it may feel to our justice-conscious hearts, in most cases *it is typically better to cover an offense in love when we feel another person may have sinned against us*. Yet there are occasions where the right course of action is to confront another person in love (Luke 17:3-4). In all such instances, the goal of confrontation is restoration and gospel ministry (Matthew 18:15; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; James 5:19-20). The following four circumstances may necessitate loving confrontation:

WHEN THE SINFULNESS OF THE BEHAVIOR CAN BE CLEARLY DISCERNED.

As mentioned above, in some situations the motivations of another person are not easily discerned. In others, the sinfulness of a person's action is clearer. In instances of clearly discernable sin, confrontation is a loving way to help a person understand their behavior, to repent from it, and to be reconciled to God by faith.

What kinds of behaviors are clearly discerned, and as such, merit confrontation? Consider serious behaviors that represent a threat to a person's Christian witness, or those that pose a risk to unity among believers. Gossip, division, slander, hateful speech, drunkenness, drug use, sexual sin, or other significantly impactful sins all reflect circumstances when confrontation is likely the best course of action.

WHEN A PATTERN OF SINFUL BEHAVIOR EMERGES.

At times a person's behavior may not be severe in accordance with the above description but is nonetheless consistent enough that confrontation would be helpful or necessary. Patterns of discontentedness, grumbling, anger, or complaint may all be situations where addressing a person's heart could not only provide a context for help, but also a way to demonstrate Christlike mercy and love.

WHEN THE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR DAMAGES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM/HER.

Perhaps you are facing a situation when you are unsure of the intentions of another person yet have experienced some personal harm as a result of his or her actions. Here we must be careful, for we often see through a distorted lens (Jeremiah 17:9). However, if a relationship is damaged because of an offense, either real or perceived, then it may be best to discuss the circumstance with the other person so that there can be an opportunity for peace (Romans 12:18). If we approach the other person in humility and with a desire for reconciliation, then our likelihood of seeing a relationship resorted only increases.

WHEN THE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR IS HARMING HIMSELF, HERSELF OR OTHERS.

A final category where confrontation may be necessary is when a person's behavior is harming himself or herself or other people. Sinful behaviors and lifestyles such as addiction, substance

abuse, abusive patterns or oppression,¹ self-harm, slander, gossip, division and others are all situations where real harm comes both by those who perpetrate such actions and those who are affected by them. Even when such actions are not committed against you directly, it may be necessary to confront a person, both out of concern for the damage their sin is causing and also out of a desire for their restoration (James 5:19).

BIBLICAL CONFRONTATION IN ACTION

If you discern confrontation is necessary in response to the above situations, we can use the truth of Scripture as a guide. In particular, consider two passages that speak the process of biblical confrontation, Ephesians 4:15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

Ephesians 4:15: *“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...”*

1 Thessalonians 5:14: *“And I urge you brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”*

These two passages high several important elements to biblical confrontation:

- **Love.** The motivation of any confrontation must be Christlike love. We must never confront out of judgment or retribution, but rather from a desire for a person’s restoration.
- **Truth.** Scripture calls us to not rejoice in wrongdoing, but to rejoice in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). We must be willing to speak truthfully to others if biblical confrontation is to accomplish its goals.
- **Encouragement.** As we confront, it is important that we also provide a positive picture of *what could be* in a person’s life. As with our own repentance, we should seek to encourage a person away from sin and toward godliness as part of loving confrontation.
- **Help.** The beginning of John’s gospel describes the incarnational aspect of Jesus’ ministry to his people: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory...” (John 1:14). In like manner, we have an opportunity to enter into a person’s situation to help them, even as we confront them over sin. Out of loving concern, we should offer tangible help in one’s pursuit of Christ, whether through accountability, prayer, or other acts of service.
- **Patience.** God is patient with us, and we should strive toward patience with others. Change unto Christ is a process, and our role is to bear witness to the grace of God, to speak the truth in love, to pray for his or her good, and to come alongside the other person as we help them in their pursuit of Christ.

¹ In instances of abuse or oppression, ensuring the safety of any victims should be the first step a person takes before any confrontation of perpetrators should occur. Additionally, responding to abuse may involve making a mandatory report with legal authorities depending on the criminality of one’s actions. Church leaders should also be notified, so that proper care can be provided for those affected by such instances of sin. If you suspect that you may need to address abusive or oppressive behavior in a person’s life, please reach out to the Northway Care and Counseling team for assistance (counseling@northwaychurch.com).