OVERCOMING OFFENCES, CRITICISMS AND FALSE ACCUSATIONS

In the context of ministry, experiencing offenses, criticism, and false accusation, has the potential of leading us to great discouragement or to increased maturity in our lives. We must understand the fact that if we are in ministry, offenses, criticism, and false accusation will come.

The question is, “How will we respond?” In over thirty five years of ministry, I’ve observed many leaders give up their ministry, and even their Christian walk, because of not being able to endure these difficult tests. On the other hand, I’ve also seen strength of character develop when persons have endured these challenging experiences by the grace of God!

Jesus, great leaders such as Moses and Paul, and many others in the Bible experienced offenses and accusations. We can, therefore, learn lessons from the Bible as to how we can respond when faced with these challenges in our lives and ministry. When confronted with these difficult experiences, God’s grace is sufficient to carry us through to victory!


(Pro18:19). “An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel”

(Proverbs 19:20). “Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise”

(Re 12:10-11). “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and
night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

OBJECTIVES:

1. Observe biblical and other examples of how offenses come
2. Learn practical steps on how to overcome offenses
3. Learn how positive criticism can be helpful and how negative criticism can be hurtful
4. Learn why false accusations come and how to deal with them
5. Study biblical principles that will help us walk in victory in facing all of these challenges in our lives and ministry

PART I: OVERCOMING OFFENCES

DEFINITIONS; To offend (verb) means: “To strike against; to transgress….; to cause difficulty or discomfort or injury; to cause dislike, anger, or vexation; to cause to feel resentful.” (Webster Dictionary). Offence (noun) means: “The state of being offended; a violation of a moral or ethical code.” (The American Heritage Dictionary) In the context of this teaching, “offense” would imply the first definition—“The state of being offended.”

Some observations:

- We may offend intentionally or unintentionally.
- When a person is offended, and they take it in a personal way, it becomes an offence.
- Every Christian should be offended by the sin that abounds around us.

What grieves the heart of God should grieve and offend us. However, in the context of this teaching, we will primarily look at the negative impact of receiving offences. We will also learn how
to overcome offences in a positive way. It is possible to offend in the right way. The preaching of the Gospel is an offence to many. Exhortation, correction, and discipline may be an offence to some, but if done with love and a correct attitude, it can serve a good purpose. John 6:60-71. Jesus lost disciples to hard teaching

**BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF PERSONS WHO WERE OFFENDED AND THEIR RESPONSES**

- **Cain** was offended that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and not his (Genesis 4:1-16). His response was anger that led to murder.

- **Abimelech** was offended that Abraham lied to him about Sarah being his sister when in reality she was his wife (Genesis 20). Through a dream, and because he had the fear of the Lord, he confronted Abraham, but in the end he blessed him.

- Joseph’s brothers were offended that their father seemed to favour him above themselves (Genesis 37:4). Their jealousy turned to hatred that led to selling Joseph to Egypt.

- **The children of Israel** were offended with Moses on numerous occasions in the wilderness because of unfulfilled expectations (Exodus 14:10-12). Their offence led to chronic complaining.

- **Miriam and Aaron** were offended by Moses wife/marriage and questioned why God spoke only through Moses (Num12). Moses allowed God to deal with their rebellion and interceded on their behalf when they faced the judgment of God.

- **King Saul** was offended by the people’s praise of David (I Sam 18:1-16). Saul’s jealousy led him to seek ways to kill David. David did not seek to defend himself or fight back in any way.

- **Job** was offended by his “comforters.” He pours out his laments, but in the end he acknowledges his faith in God (Job 19:25-27).

- It would appear that **Jeremiah** was offended by God’s dealings with him (Lam 3:1-20). However, in the end he recognized the faithfulness of God (verses 21-27).
• **Jonah** was offended that God had compassion on Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). Jonah turned bitter toward God and became very angry and discouraged (Jonah 4).

• Herodias was offended by the message of John the Baptist (Matt 14:1-12). Her offense led to hatred and revenge. John was beheaded at her request.

• **The Pharisees** were constantly offended by the teachings of Jesus (Mk 7:1-13). Their offense of Jesus led them to plot evil against him with the ultimate plan to kill him. Jesus was not offended by their responses to His teachings and constant threats. He kept speaking the truth.

• **The disciples** were very offended (“indignant”) with James and John when they requested to be seated on the right and left of Jesus in glory (Mark 10:35-45). Jesus used the occasion as an opportunity to teach on humility, service, and suffering.

• The temple guards and religious leaders were very offended because Peter and John were teaching the people about the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4). Peter and John used this occasion to testify more about Jesus and call the church to prayer.

• **The Grecian Jews** were offended because the widows were being overlooked by the apostles (Acts 6:1-7). Rather than defend themselves, the apostles made a specific plan of action that resolved the problem.

• **Barnabas** was offended that Mark had deserted him and Paul on one of their missionary trips (Acts 15:36-41). Because of deep feelings about this and a “sharp disagreement,” they parted ways.

**What are additional examples from the Bible concerning offences?**

• Offences left unrestrained lead to anger, resentment, and perhaps murder (Cain, Joseph’s brothers, Saul, the Pharisees and religious leaders, Herodias, etc.). We should not conclude that these were extreme situations that would never affect us. The standard under grace is much higher than under the law. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement.’ But I tell
you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, "Raca," is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell (Matthew 5:21-22). John writes to the believers and makes some very clear statements about the implications of not loving and holding hate. He says, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him” (I John 3:14-15).

- When offended, or in a position where we could be easily offended, we can make wise choices (Abimelech, Moses, Joseph, David, etc.).

- Offences can lead to complaining and murmuring (Children of Israel in the wilderness, Grecian Jews). There may be legitimate complaints that need attention. As leaders, we must not react with a negative attitude and overlook a legitimate need, even if it was presented to us in a bad way. On the other hand, we must confront heart issues so that persons can grow in Godly character and discipline.

- Being offended with God can affect even the strongest of persons (Jeremiah, David, Jonah, etc.). It’s good to confess our offence to God, but it’s also important to put our trust in His unfailing faithfulness.

- In the church there will be offences (disciples with James and John, Paul and Barnabas, etc.). The key is to recognize the offence, learn from it, and seek a Godly solution

**ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF HOW OFFENCES HAPPEN**

In the Church:

1. When a person is overlooked for a church position that they really thought belonged to them.
2. When a person didn't speak to them or seemed to ignore them in a setting that ordinarily there would be an exchange of conversation.
3. When a person receives an exhortation or correction that doesn't seem fair. Or, maybe it was needed, but it felt like it was given in an insensitive way. Maybe the correction was needed and given in a sensitive way, but the flesh screams out in rebellion against it.

4. When there was insensitive and unfair criticism made of someone’s actions.

5. When a person is discouraged and going through a trial and it seems like no one notices. Or, if they do, they don’t seem to really care about their situation.

6. When a person has unfulfilled expectations: It could be felt that people should give financial help, encouragement, assistance in some way, or a host of things.

7. When another person is recognized for their accomplishments and this person is not even mentioned for what they thought was a greater work.

8. When a person is honoured for their birthday or other important events and this person is not honoured.

9. What are additional ways that persons are offended?

In the home/marriage

1. Insensitivity
2. Unkind words
3. Unfulfilled expectations
4. Lack of respect or honour
5. What additional ways can a person offend at home or in a marriage?

WHAT ARE BELIEVERS RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING OFFENCES?

Note: In this context we are not talking about the offence of the Gospel. Here we are speaking about practical implications of Christian character.
1. As a believer, in the spirit of love and grace, I will seek to develop a Christ-like character that be sensitive as to how I relate to others. The fruit of the Spirit will govern my life (Gal 5:22-26).

2. We must be careful not to offend the weaker person (Matthew 18:5-6). This takes a lot of discernment as to how far one carries this.

3. When we know that we offended someone, and we are responsible for the offence because of insensitivity or wrong attitudes, we must be quick to repent and ask forgiveness (I John 1:7-9). When we don’t walk in the light with our brothers and sisters in Christ, family members, or anyone we offended, we build walls that lead to anger, hostility, frustration, and the list goes on.

**HOW DOES ONE OVERCOME OFFENCES?**

1. Die to self-will that demands justice for my rights that have been violated (Gal 2:20-21; Matt 26-39-22; I Cor 15:31). In this last reference, Paul said, “I die daily.”

2. When necessary, confront the person that offended you in love using the principle found in Matt 18:15-17.

3. We never overcome an offence by offending the other person in return. In other words, our heart attitude must be right when seeking a solution to an offence.

4. There are so many times we will be offended, but the issue is more about God building character in us than our trying to appeal to our own rights. “A man’s wisdom gives him patience: it is to his glory to overlook an offence” (Pro 19:11).

5. We must approach the person who offended us in a spirit of meekness, recognizing that we may have misperceived ideas or may have been guilty of doing the same thing in our own life. Coming with this type of attitude diffuses the confrontation.

6. It is necessary to understand the principle of forgiveness. God will only forgive us to the extent that we forgive others (Matt 6:14-15).

7. There is no offence too great for Jesus’ work on the cross (Isaiah 53:3-6).
8. Releasing forgiveness does not mean that we don’t confront issues that need to be addressed or that life will automatically go on as before, especially where some great brokenness has taken place. It does mean, that as a believer, I will release forgiveness by God’s grace, and find release for my own soul (Ephesians 4:31-32).

9. Unforgiveness will lead to bitterness. The writer to the Hebrews says, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb 12:14-15).

NOTE: Research from the secular medical field reveals that where people are holding unforgiveness, it often leads to physical or emotional sickness. Where deep issues of offence are buried in ones life, it is vitally important to seek Spirit-filled counsel that can help them release the offences and find freedom in Christ. The Agape prayer ministry is one very effective way of finding assistance in this area.

CONSEQUENCES OF HOLDING OFFENCES

2. Builds walls in relationships.
3. Leads to potential sickness—physical, emotional, and spiritual.
4. Causes bondage in a persons life that opens the door to all kinds of Satanic oppression including major discouragement, fear, negative attitudes, a critical spirit, feelings of rejection, and more.

BENEFITS OF OVERCOMING OFFENCES

1. Experience freedom in Christ that results in joy, peace, love, and more.
2. Experience openness in relationships.
4. Closes the door to satanic oppression, which results in greater victor
5. Good health - physical, emotional, and spiritual.