

# Refuse to be offended

(a study from Steve Gregg's lectures)

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## **1) Foundation of message**

a) Bible says that relationships are most important thing in the Christian's life

*In Matt 22:37-40 Jesus said:*

*"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

*NKJV*

- i) With God (primary)
- ii) With Others (close 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- iii) They're tightly inter-related

*1 John 4:20-21*

*20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

*NKJV*

- iv) Also in 1 John

*1 John 5:1*

*5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begotten also loves him who is begotten of Him.*

*NKJV*

## **2) Passage of topic**

a) *Luke 17:1-10*

*Luke 17:1-10*

*17:1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3 Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."*

*5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. 7 And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. 10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"*

*NKJV*

- i) Four sections or topics
  - (1) Getting offended and not offending people.
  - (2) Forgiving those who sin against you.
  - (3) Faith – what can be accomplished with it.
  - (4) Servants – what their expectations are.
- ii) What do they have in common?

- (1) Seemingly four separate topics.
- (2) But can be stitched together in one theme... **how to handle offenses.**
- iii) The word for “offenses” in vs. 1 and “offend” in vs. 2
  - (1) Noun version = NT:4625 *skandalon* (skan'-dal-on) ("scandal"); probably from a derivative of NT:2578; a trap-stick (bent sapling), i.e. snare (figuratively, cause of displeasure or sin): KJV - occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumblingblock.
    - (a) KJV, NKJV = offense.
    - (b) NASU = stumble
    - (c) NIV = cause to sin
  - (2) Verb tense = NT:4624 *skandalizo* (skan-dal-id'-zo) (“scandalize”); from NT:4625; to entrap, i.e. trip up (figuratively, stumble [transitively] or entice to sin, apostasy or displeasure): KJV – (make to) offend.
    - (a) KJV, NKJV = offend
    - (b) NASU = stumble
    - (c) NIV = cause to sin
  - (3) Either is good
  - (4) An offense can be a stumbling block for someone.
  - (5) For this particular topic, we use the NKJV translation... “offend”

### **3) Offenses (vs. 1-2)**

a) *The one thing in common with all ruined or damaged relationships*

- i) Many think it’s sin, and that’s true, but...
  - (1) If someone sins against me, I can still choose to love them.
  - (2) Relationships can (and often do) still exist if there’s sin.
- ii) Relationship is deteriorated when one party feels offended in some way by the other.
  - (1) Examples:
    - (a) Someone fails to contact you for awhile.
    - (b) Someone insults you.
    - (c) Someone betrays your trust.
- iii) Some people like to be offended.
  - (1) Remember everything anyone has ever done to them.
  - (2) Never forgive.
  - (3) Harbor and nurture bitterness in their heart.
  - (4) Tend to forget the good things and remember the bad things about people
    - (a) Opposite of a healthy mind.
- iv) Taking offense is a function of anger.
  - (1) Lower grade or degree of anger

b) *Offenses will come (vs. 1)*

- i) He warns “Don’t you be the one offending”
  - (1) Deserves a swim in the ocean with a millstone necklace.
- ii) In fact, gospel is an offense to many unbelievers.
- iii) Pharisees and Saducees were often offended by Jesus:

*Matt 15:12-14*

*12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" 13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."*

*NKJV*

- iv) Jesus just got through telling them they were hypocrites.
- v) But we can't help it when being faithful to God offends people.
- vi) We're talking about sinful offense. When someone wrongs you through:
  - (1) Words (gossip, slander, insult, etc)
  - (2) Deeds (You name it.)
- vii) People will wrong you and offer offense to you. But it's only ½ the picture.
- viii) We don't have to **take** the offense against us. We don't have to **feel** offended.
  - (1) Not mandatory.
  - (2) Option to refuse.
  - (3) When we feel offended by someone, we choose to feel that way.
  - (4) Very liberating thing to discover.
  - (5) Freedom in the ability to choose our attitude.
- ix) Christians are called and encouraged **not** to take offense.

*Prov 19:11*

*11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger,  
And his glory is to overlook a transgression.  
NKJV*

- (1) Godly perspective makes us slow to anger as He is.
- (2) It is our "glory" (or honor, to our credit) to overlook transgression.
  - (a) Not our own, we must own up to those.
  - (b) But transgressions against us.

*Prov 16:32*

*32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,  
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.  
NKJV*

- (3) Better than the mighty
- (4) Poetic parallelism:
  - (a) He's better than a general who wins a military victory
  - (b) More noble than a warrior.
- (5) Here's the opposite

*Prov 25:28*

*28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit  
Is like a city broken down, without walls.  
NKJV*

- (6) Image of defenselessness
- (7) Anyone can enter into him and control him
- (8) If we can't rule our attitudes, we're subject to the enemy.

c) *Two possible explanations when someone offers offense to us.,*

- i) They did it on purpose
- ii) They did not do it on purpose.
- iii) IF not on purpose, should I take offense?
  - (1) Unfair, carnal, and small-minded.
- iv) IF it is on purpose, should I then take offense?
  - (1) Do I want to give them what they want?
  - (2) Will Rogers said: "I am at the mercy of any man who can make me lose my temper."

- (3) Do I want to have someone else control my inner emotions?
- v) Either case offers no good reason to feel offended.
  - (1) Unfair in one case, unwise in the other.
- vi) Not the same thing as being apathetic.
  - (1) If you don't care about someone, you don't care what they think about you either.

d) *It's about LOVE*

- i) Caring about the other person enough not to be offended by them.
- ii) Walking in the Spirit. (fruit of the Spirit is Love - *Galatians 5*)
- iii) Obeying what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

*Matt 5:43-45*

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;  
NKJV

- iv) This love is the basis of refusing to be offended.

*1 Cor 13:4-8*

4 Love **suffers long and is kind**; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, **is not provoked**, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 **bears all things**, believes all things, hopes all things, **endures all things**. 8 Love never fails.  
NKJV

- v) Abiding in the light.

*1 John 2:10*

10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.  
NKJV

- vi) Word stumbling is the same Greek word for offense
- vii) No occasion for offense in him who loves his brother.

## **4) Forgiveness (vs. 3-4)**

a) *Rebuking and Forgiving*

- i) Jesus calls for us to take two actions here.
  - (1) Rebuke him.
  - (2) Forgive him.
- ii) Not putting a condition on forgiveness here.
  - (1) Would contradict with other passages that say otherwise.

*Mark 11:25*

25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.  
NKJV

- iii) As they were crucifying Him and sneering at Him Jesus said:

*Luke 23:34*

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

NKJV

- iv) When Steven was being stoned by the mob he said:

*Acts 7:60*

*"Lord, do not charge them with this sin."*

NKJV

- v) This 1<sup>st</sup> phase of forgiveness happens in our hearts.
  - (1) Gives us the ability to love our brother.
  - (2) Gives us the proper attitude for rebuking our brother.
- vi) 2<sup>nd</sup> phase is the rebuking
  - (1) Not in anger or self-righteousness
  - (2) But in humility and graciousness.

*Gal 6:1*

*6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

NKJV

- (3) His sin is going to hurt him more than you (remember the millstone).
- (4) It's about the restoring of the relationship (both to you and to God).
- vii) 1<sup>st</sup> aspect for our own heart, 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect about restoration.
  - (1) One sense it's unilateral – "God so loved the world" when he was planning out salvation.
  - (2) Another sense it's relational – Conditional upon restoring trust.
- viii) Forgive over and over
  - (1) Up to seven times/day.
    - (a) Number 7 represents completion in scripture
    - (b) Forgive completely. (love keeps no record of wrongs – *1 Cor 13*)
- ix) Seek to restore trust through repentance of the offender.
  - (1) Trust is the foundation of a relationship.
  - (2) Can have relationship without love, but seldom without trust.
    - (a) Many couples do this.
      - (i) Fall out of love but stay together because trust has not been betrayed.
  - (3) If you don't trust someone, you're not going to turn your back on them.
  - (4) Salvation is that way.
    - (a) God loves everyone and forgives them enough to sacrifice His Son.
    - (b) Total forgiveness, that which brings us into a relationship with Him, is conditional upon our repentance.
      - (i) God can't trust us until we repent and agree to follow His ways.
      - (ii) Until then communion is broken.
- x) We should keep in mind two things:
  - (1) As they've offended us, we have offended others.
  - (2) The offender is the victim of the same enemy we are.
    - (a) They are not our enemy, the devil is.

## **5) "Faith as a mustard seed" (vs 5-6).**

a) *Just our opinion of God*

- i) Faith is simply having a high opinion of God
- ii) Not some mystical force to harness or obtain.
- iii) Not an achievement of some sort.
- iv) Just means... You believe God.
  - (1) **Judge** Him to be reliable.

Heb 11:11

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she **judged** Him faithful who had promised.

NKJV

- (2) If we don't have faith, we judge Him to be unreliable. Make Him a liar.

1 John 5:10

he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

NKJV

- v) A mustard seed grows into a large bush or tree.
  - (1) We must give opportunity for our faith to grow.
  - (2) Must give God opportunities to show He's faithful
    - (a) Can't do it if we're doing everything on our own power.

## 6) **Servant's attitude (vs. 7-10)**

a) *Low expectations*

- i) Slaves are owned by their masters.
  - (1) They don't expect to be thanked or rewarded for their duties.
  - (2) Slaves don't think about their rights, they have none.
  - (3) We were bought for a price (*1 Cor. 6*) and are therefore God's slave.
    - (a) We are unprofitable servants if we meet God's minimum requirements.
  - (4) We have nothing to gripe about.
    - (a) If we're bible believing Christians, we know what we deserve...**HELL!**
- ii) The only time we get offended is when we get less/worse than we think we deserve.
  - (1) People can do worse than they ought to us, but we can never get less than we deserve from them.
  - (2) If we were abused every minute for our entire lives and died and went to heaven, we'd get better than we deserve.
- iii) This is the cure for getting offended.
  - (1) High opinion of God, Low opinion of ourselves.
  - (2) Joseph knew this: (See Genesis 37-50)
    - (a) His brothers sold him into slavery. (offense)
    - (b) Potiphars wife accused him of trying to rape her. (offense)
    - (c) When brothers came to buy food from him, they were at his mercy.
      - (i) They thought he'd have them killed.
    - (d) What did he say?

Gen 50:19-20

"Do not be afraid, **for am I in the place of God?** 20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good,

NKJV

- (3) We have to realize that God works all things for good (Romans 8:28)
  - (a) Sometimes those things hurt, but their for our good.
  - (b) How can I be offended by somebody if I believe in a sovereign God?
  - (c) How can I have that kind of faith and still be offended?
  - (d) How can I have a low opinion of self and still get offended?

- (4) People that are easily offendable have a high opinion of themselves, and a low opinion of God.

b) *Getting offended on behalf of others.*

- i) Sometimes it is a righteous thing to get offended on behalf of others, but not for ourselves.
  - (1) Jesus was offended by the money changers before He drove them out with a whip.
  - (2) Prophets were outraged at times.
  - (3) Apostles were outraged at times.
  - (4) Always against those who stood in opposition to God, never themselves.
- ii) Sins against us, we're obligated to forgive.
  - (1) Righteous anger is when the sin is against others.
    - (a) Jesus did it:

*Mark 3:5*

*5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."*

*NKJV*

- (b) He was just trying to do good, the work of God.
- (c) Paul also had such a heart:

*2 Tim 4:9-16*

*9 Be diligent to come to me quickly; 10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. 12 And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come--and the books, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. 15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.*

*NKJV*

- (d) What was the difference between his friends deserting him and Alexander the coppersmith?
  - (i) The coppersmith resisted his words. He opposed God.
- (2) We need to leave room for God's justice.

*Heb 10:30-33*

*30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;*

*NKJV*

## **7) Closing.**

- a) *Relationships that would prosper if we refused to be offended.*
  - i) Marriage
    - (1) What if we loved our spouse so much that nothing they did could offend us?
  - ii) Parent/Child relationships
    - (1) Same goes here.
  - iii) Friends/Neighbors
    - (1) What if we prayed for the foulest, nastiest neighbor we had?
  - iv) Employers/Employees.



## **8) Questions for discussion.**

### *a) Offenses: Section 3*

- i) Q: What kinds of things are common in degrading or ruining relationships?
- ii) A: Offense, feeling offended (form of anger)
  - (1) They will be offered, but we don't have to accept them.
  - (2) Biblically, called not to take offense (Prov 19:11, 16:32, 25:28)
  - (3) 2 Possible explanations: On purpose or not (explore this)
  - (4) Not about apathy, but love (walking in Spirit, loving enemies and blessing those who curse us.) 1 Corinthians 13.
  - (5) Don't be offense giver either.

### *b) Forgiveness: Section 4*

- i) Q: What is forgiveness and why are we called to forgive?
- ii) A: 2 aspects.
  - (1) Your heart, or willingness, to forgive
  - (2) Love for your brother compels you to restore the relationship
    - (a) Between God
    - (b) Between you.
  - (3) Forgiving in your heart releases you from the burden of that sin (bitterness, hurt, etc.)
  - (4) Rebuking brother gives them opportunity to repent and repair the relationship.
    - (a) Seek to restore trust.
    - (b) Without repentance, one cannot enjoy the benefits of forgiveness.

### *c) Faith: Section 5.*

- i) Q: What is faith?
- ii) A: Simply a high opinion of God
  - (1) Nothing mystical and magical
  - (2) Just belief in God.
  - (3) Judging God to be reliable or not.
  - (4) Not an accomplishment or work.

### *d) Servanthood: Section 6*

- i) Q: What causes us to take (hang onto) offense from people?
- ii) A: Perception of getting less/worse than we deserve.
  - (1) Slaves don't consider their "rights"
  - (2) Slaves don't expect thanks or rewards.
  - (3) Slaves of God have nothing to gripe about (deserve Hell)
  - (4) People can treat us worse than they ought, but not worse than we deserve.
  - (5) Cure for getting offended is to have a high opinion of God, and a low opinion of oneself.