

The Abundant Life Bible Study

Week 4

Offenses

Matthew 5:24

...leave your gift at the altar and go First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Copy the above verse:

This week we will be talking about offenses and how they will impact our life. Many of us have our “pet peeves” or things that offend us in life. We can get offended by things that people say to us, things our Pastor says that we don’t want to hear, or by people taking too long to do something. We can get offended at God because he didn’t answer our prayers the “right way.” Maybe our life isn’t going a certain way, so we get mad, and get offended at our situation in life. This in turn, goes hand in hand with how we react and respond in life.

We get offended so we stop doing something. We may stop attending a church, a group or we may even stop praying. We sit, hurt, and seethe. All this does nothing but hurt us. We may “think” we are punishing the offended party but we are only hurting ourselves. Life around us still goes on, just with us not in it. Now we are alone. Alone with our thoughts of self-pity and hurt. We sit and think things through more than we should. Satan has set the trap and has us caught!

Offenses usually start out slow and then build to an explosion of anger. Maybe someone will say something that hurts you, but you suppress that feeling and keep going on. Then something else will happen and you start to burn inside. More events continue and the piles of offenses build and build until something ignites it and some unfortunate person gets the brunt of it. Then we “blow up” at them and feel guilty afterwards. This can happen over and over in life and you say you’re sorry, pray for God to take anger away, events would happen again, and the cycle would continue over and over. Why does this cycle continue? Why do you feel like this isn’t going away? Is it me?

First you have to stop and go to the Word of God and see what he says about taking offense. In our verse the bible says that we are to first get rid of our offense so that we can worship and come to him freely. We can’t go to God and ask him for things if we have unforgiveness towards others. That is why the verse says to first be reconciled with our brother and then come back to the altar. If there is someone or something in your life that you need to forgive, do it. Do it now, don’t delay.

We want the Lord to accept our worship with a pure heart. We want him to listen and answer our prayers. He won’t do that if we have unforgiveness inside of us. He tells us so in his word.

Daily Bible reading: Matthew 15 Tradition and Commandments, The faith of a Canaanite Woman, Jesus heals many, Jesus feeds the four thousand.

Prayer

Lord I come to you humbly. I am asking if there is anyone or anything that I need to ask forgiveness for in my life. I do not want people or situations to be a stumbling block in the path that you have for me. I am asking you to expose them and show me where I need to forgive. In your name I pray Amen

Day two

Offended by the truth

Matthew 24:10

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Copy the verse:

If we truly want to be free and live life to the fullest, then we need to stop taking offense. Sometimes we don't particularly "hate" someone we are just offended by what they do. Offenses themselves are generally not anger, hurt feelings, or resentment. But those annoyances and irritations have the unfortunate ability to build into grudges. These usually lead to sins that a person has allowed themselves to be led into. The sad part is that it is usually done by the persons own mind. After some time your heart can become hardened and anger takes root. You may not think of it as anger but that is what it is called. They build upon each other little by little until your love has grown cold towards them. It causes our hearts to shut out the goodness and blessing that God has for us.

Let's examine some things that we can become offended by:

Offended by the truth

And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32

When we hear the truth, for the most part, we would assume it is good. But when we are prideful and hear something that goes against what we have been taught or brought up with it can be hard to accept. Obeying and accepting what is true from God can reap many good things, unlike the world's truth. When we hear the truth and act upon it, it sets our present conditions into line with God and it prepares us for far greater blessings than we can imagine. We want to be moving forward in our walk with the Lord. We don't want to stay stagnant. How much better is a life that is lived to the fullest just by laying aside our pride and becoming meek and submissive to what God has for us?

For many, they make excuses of why they don't want to change or don't want to hear certain truths. All those excuses are doing nothing but preventing them from moving forward. We want to be FREE!!! We want to be free so that God can use us in a mighty way.

I remember very much when God's word—the truth---was teaching me how to change things about myself. I thought in my own mind that I was a pretty good person, but I realized I had a lot of hidden attitudes and heart issues to work on. There was more than one time that I felt like I didn't want to do this. God was showing me how I had prideful, control issues. I wanted to take charge and fix things. I wanted to do things my way, because I thought it was best. He was showing me that I was a manipulator, and that I had to stop feeling sorry for myself. I had to let down my guard and humble

myself before my family and God. It was tough. But I kept on it. It was stretching me and it was not comfortable. But just as a caterpillar stretches out of a cocoon and transforms into a butterfly, that is the same metamorphosis that we go through. When we are stretched, it may feel a little uncomfortable but that is where we are able to push through and enter into the next level of what God has for us.

Daily bible reading: Matthew 16, The Pharisees and Sadducees Demand Signs, Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ, Jesus Foretells his Death and Resurrection, Take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Prayer

Lord I am coming to you asking for you to show me anymore areas where I am being offended in. If there is an area of truth in my life that I am going against, Lord I ask you to expose it and let me see the truth from your word. I want your truths, your word to be growth in my life. Help me to let down any areas of pride that I don't want to give up and give to you. I want my life to be completely change by you. In your name I ask this confidently, Amen

Day three

Offended by circumstances in life

Mark 4:14-17

The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. **When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.** These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

Copy the boldfaced part of the above verse:

This truth is an important one, you see it happening every day. If someone is not deeply rooted in God's word, when trouble comes, they fall away. This is a big testimony that I know I have encountered many times throughout my life. People appear to have such a deep personal relationship with the Lord, but then hard times fall. Instead of digging deep into God's word and turning to Him for strength and guidance, they crumble and fade away. It is a sad reality. God's word tells us about it so that we can be aware and careful not to do it.

When we are faced with trials or bad situations they can either make us stronger or they will make us resentful. When bad things happen, if we take offense at the situation, we start to blame others for it. We may blame God for disrupting our cushy lifestyles. We may even blame the devil---and that is rightly so. But we can also take offense at other people who seem to be more blessed than we are. Sometimes it is just resentment. That resentment takes root to form bitterness towards life and the situations that come our way. But we must be made aware of resentment. This is part of not taking offense.

When we are faced with these trials or bad situations we need to look at them from a whole new perspective. We need to think, that by going through this, it can actually help us get deeper and stronger roots in our relationship with God.

Personally, when I was alone and went through trials, I had only one person to hang onto, and that was God. During those times is when my faith was strengthened. I realized that once I gave over my situations to Him, He could do far greater of a job than I could ever do. Seeing His hand do the things that for years I tried to control and change was pretty amazing.

When times of trial arise you can really see how faithful you truly are to God. Emotional hearers of the Word always fall apart during times of trial. They become unstable. They get angry and make accusations against others, instead of rationally looking at the situation. This is only a sign of spiritual immaturity. Not that you can't get emotional during times of trial---but what I am saying is that inside, your faith will help you stand the test of your trials. Knowing that God is in control and that He will

work ALL things out together for your good. Be careful to guard, and to not let your emotions take charge of your faith.

When bad things or situations happen in your life, don't blame God. Lamentations 3:25-28 says that God *lays the yoke of divine discipline on us for our benefits*. Sometimes it is good for us to experience disappointment. We learn to just shake off the dirt, get back up, and go on. We learn not to place our hope in things, but to place our hope in God. When we don't get our way all of the time, we learn to appreciate things much more. We grow very thankful for the things that we do have. God is at work ALL OF THE TIME. We must trust God and NEVER accuse Him of not caring.

Daily Bible reading: Matthew 17 The transfiguration, Jesus heals a boy with a demon, The temple tax

Prayer:

Lord I wanted to be deeply rooted in your word so that when tried, I will not fall away. I don't want my experiences with you to be shallow, I want them deeply grounded. I want to be firmly planted in your word and what you say. I will not be moved. I am confident in your words and thank you for this teaching, Amen

Day four

Offended by ourselves

Matthew 18:8-9

If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Copy the bold faced part of this verse:

In these verses God is referring to “cutting out” and getting rid of the things that are causing you to stumble in your life. Having a guilty conscience is a major problem in life. It causes you to shrink back in fear of people finding out your “hidden” sin. You will lack boldness to stand for things God wants you to stand for. When Jesus died on the cross He did it to set us free from condemnation and feelings of guilt. But it is our choice to make right decisions once we accept that He did that for us. We cannot continue to choose sinful behaviors and expect to receive the blessings and benefits of knowing Jesus. His blood bought our freedom. But if we remain in sin when we know that it is wrong, then we are not using the freedom He gave us.

How can we go about not offending ourselves? First we accept and call it what it is, SIN. Stop excusing away your problems. State it, name it, then avoid it!! Stop participating in that which is causing you to sin.

There are so many different things that are stumbling blocks in our lives. We need to cut them out and throw them away.

This can include some of the following:

- Magazines with immodestly dressed people.
- Movies that you would NOT sit with Jesus and watch.
- Access to things online that you should not be watching.
- Dirty jokes, bad language, gossip with people.
- Music that does not have a positive message.
- Books that cause you to dream up images of sinful things.
- Friends that lead us to do things that are not godly.

Daily Bible reading: Matthew 18, Who is the greatest, Temptation to Sin, Parable of the Lost sheep, If your brother sins against you, The parable of the unforgiving servant.

Prayer:

Lord if there are any areas of my life that I need to cut out, please show me what I need to do. If I am tempted to do or to look at something I should not, expose it in my life. Give me a person that I can be accountable with so that I can be free in these areas. I am confident that I will be pure and holy no matter what I have done in my past. I thank you for forgiveness and saving grace from these things. In your name I pray, Amen

Day five

Giving offense to others

2 Corinthians 6:3

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

Copy the above verse:

Not being an offensive person is a HUGE way to share the testimony of Christ in your life. If we as Christians walk around with sinful behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles how is anyone else, whom has those same issues going to want to change things in their own life? Why would they want a “God” who doesn’t even manifest himself in them? One who doesn’t help them change from their wrong ways? People are looking for a way out. They want to get away from their worldly lifestyles and ways. If we can’t show it to them, and prove how much better our lives are, then why would they want what we say God offers?

What is the best way to avoid giving offense to other people?

Think before you do or say something!!!

If we were just to “think” a moment before we start to speak, we can usually avoid offending someone. The Bible says it is hard to tame the tongue. For many of us, we just speak before we think. When our friends are sick with the flu for weeks on end and we start talking about how we prayed and did not get that sickness---we are causing offense to someone. If we know people are struggling with sin in their lives and we prance around dabbling in the sin—because we don’t have issues with it, we are causing offense.

If you are in a disagreement with someone, the best thing you can do is stay calm. Allow others to have their way in the conflict. By choosing to remain calm and not be part of the disagreement puts a quick end to the anger and will stop the offense. Being a part of foolish and dumb arguments is NOT a sign of a believer. God wants us to be the peacemakers, helping others to learn to have self control in their lives.

Be considerate of others and think how they feel in their own situation. The saying “put yourself in someone else’s shoes” is a huge reminder of how we are to walk around in love and not in offense.

The less offense we take the happier we will become and the more peace we will have in our lives. When our hearts are free and there is no offense then we can just love other people. When you are free to love people without offense that is the biggest thing in life. Jesus calls us to love others in this way. We will get the most reward by taking this approach.

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.

1 Philippians 9-10

Paul prays this so that love would abound more and more in our hearts. We will have love in our hearts and will not take offense or give offense to others because the first thing that flows out of our lives is love. Let love at all times keep you in a place where you can just love others. The more that you can get your mind off of yourself, the happier you will be.

We may think it is hard to live this life as a Christian, but it is nothing compared to the life of a sinner. It is hard work to be a sinner and live a life of hopelessness. Having no one or way to turn to in life and just going about in our own sinful desires is hard. People of the world when in times of need or desperation have nowhere to turn. They give into Satan and let him destroy them. They may "think" that they need no God to help them in life, but trials and tribulations WILL COME. *Woe to the man who does not put his trust in God almighty.*

Another reason of why we should not take offense is because it is NOT always about "ME!!". Some think that everything in life is about "them." When someone is angry and retaliates against us, we take it personally. The majority of the time, it is about that other person and their own issues they are working out. We have to stop living irrationally or self-absorbed in our lives. This causes much needless suffering. When someone says something mean and condescending it is usually due to their own insecurities in life and they are speaking them out in hopes of sounding better themselves. We have to be on guard and be smarter than they are. A person being inconsiderate about missing an important date or being spiteful in some remark is a direct reflect of a fault in them not you. This fault in the other person does not need to become part of your problems ---so don't allow it!

Next week we will learn the steps on how not to take offense.

Daily Bible reading: Matthew 19, Teaching about divorce, Let the children come to me, The rich young man.

Prayer:

Lord, Now that I am aware of causing offense to others, I want you to show me where I am giving offense to someone else. I don't want my testimony to ever be against showing others about you. I want my life to be a shining example of your love. Bring to light when I am giving offense, help me to forgive quickly, and to love others. In your name I pray, Amen