

We Can Let Go of Offenses and Love Those Who Offend Us

Message 01 of 03 in the series: "With God's Help, We Can!"

A. God wants our lives to shine out like bright lights of love, joy, and peace in our angry, "I am offended" culture.

"Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. **Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights** in a world full of crooked and perverse people."

Philippians 2:14-15 (NLT)

"**Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors.** Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world."

1 Peter 2:12 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! With God's help, we can do this. "...God is working in you, **giving you the desire and the power** to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

"A person with good sense is **patient**, and it is to his credit that **he overlooks an offense.**"

Proverbs 19:11 (GWT)

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, **peace, patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and **self-control.**" Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

B. With God's help, we can change the way we think about being offended.

Offense = something someone says or does that makes us angry or upset.

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but **let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.** Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NLT)

1. Being offended is just part of life in our fallen world. Jesus said it would be this way. "**Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.** But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

John 16:33b (NLT)

2. We're only hurting ourselves when get offended easily. "Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—**it only leads to harm.**" Psalm 37:8 (NLT)

"Human anger **does not produce the righteousness God desires.**" James 1:20 (NLT)

"Watch out that no **poisonous root of bitterness** grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

Hebrews 12:15b (NLT)

3. We're not nearly as smart or objective as we think we are. "The first *one* to plead his cause **seems right**, until his neighbor comes and examines him." Proverbs 18:17 (NKJV)
4. We can't solve problems or even have meaningful conversations with difficult people if we're easily offended. "Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be **patient with difficult people.** Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. **Perhaps God will change those people's hearts**, and they will learn the truth." 2 Timothy 2:23-25 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! As followers of Christ, we're able to think differently about offenses because we've surrendered our entire lives to Jesus. We are no longer held captive by the standards/rules of our culture that demand we take offense and stay offended. "Because of that cross, **my interest in this world has been crucified**, and the world's interest in me has also died." Galatians 6:14b (NLT)

C. With God's help, we can love the people who offend us.

"But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! **Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.** If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the

Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. **You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.**" Luke 6:27-36 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Loving the people who have offended us is NOT easy, but with God's help, we can.

"An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars." Proverbs 18:19 (NLT)

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: **love, joy**, peace, patience, **kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness**, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

1. With God's help, we can choose to let go of anger and resentment toward those who have offended us. "And '**don't sin by letting anger control you.**' Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil." Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT)
"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)
2. With God's help, we can pray for those who have offended us. "Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; **pray that God will bless them.**" Romans 12:14 (NLT)
"When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, '**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**'" Luke 23:33-34a (NIV)
3. With God's help, we can choose to do good to those who have offended us. "Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, 'I will take revenge; I will pay them back,' says the Lord. Instead, '**if your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.** In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.' **Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.**" Romans 12:17-21 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Using the definition of an offense as something someone says or does that makes us angry or upset, why do you think so many people are easily offended in our culture these days?
2. How does God expect us to live as shining examples of love, joy, and peace when many of our friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors seem to be easily offended by almost everything? (Philippians 2:13-15, Galatians 5:22-23)
3. Discuss how following the Lord changes the way we think about being offended. (Romans 12:2)
 - Being offended is just part of life in our fallen world. Jesus said it would be this way. (John 16:33)
 - We're only hurting ourselves when we get offended easily. (Psalm 37:7-8, James 1:20, Hebrews 12:15)
 - We're not nearly as smart or objective as we think we are. (Proverbs 18:17)
 - We can't solve problems or even have meaningful conversations with difficult people if we're easily offended. (2 Timothy 2:23-25)
 - We are no longer held captive by the standards/rules of our culture that demand we take offense and stay offended. (Galatians 6:14)
4. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus practiced what He preached when He prayed that God would forgive the very people who were killing Him? (Luke 6:27-36 & 23:33-34) What should we say to God when we pray for those who have offended us?
5. Do you believe it's really possible for God to give us the ability to do good to people who have offended us terribly? (Romans 12:17-21)
6. Spend some time as a group praying for our church. Ask God to help us stay connected to Him so that our lives overflow with love and forgiveness.

Great Resource: "Unoffendable: How Just One Change Can Make All of Life Better," by Brant Hansen, W Publishing Group, 2015.