

## How to Not Be Offensive

Lesson 03 in the series: "No Offense"

"Take offense" = to become angry or upset by something that another person has said or done.

### A. We live in a fallen world filled with sinful people who will offend us.

"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers." Matthew 5:11 (NLT)

*Life Application:* We can choose to take offense and hold on to it or let it go.

"Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult." Proverbs 12:16 (NIV)

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

Proverbs 19:11 (GWT)

### B. Three things we can do to help us not be offensive to others:

1. We can choose to surrender control of our lives to the Holy Spirit every day (hour).

"...let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions... When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another." Galatians 5:16-26 (NLT)

*Note:* We are sinners who have been redeemed by Jesus and who are in the process of being transformed into His likeness a little more each day.

"And we all... are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory..."

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

"God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Romans 8:29 (NLT)

2. We can choose to repay offenses with kindness.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

"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)

*Note:* Grace is NOT for people who deserve it.

"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)

3. We can choose to pray for people who offend us, asking God to bless them.

"...love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:44-45a (NLT)

"Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them." Romans 12:14 (NLT)

*Note:* Praying effectively for people who offend us will likely involve research and asking God to stretch our capacity to love people who aren't loving to us.

"God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!' For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:18b-21 (NLT)

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### Connect Group Questions

1. Solomon said, "Fools show their annoyance at once but the prudent overlook an insult." (Proverbs 12:16) As a group, brainstorm some reasons why people might not listen to Solomon's wisdom and choose instead to stay offended. Share a time in your life when you chose to stay offended.
2. In Martin Luther King, Jr.'s autobiography he recounts his attitude during negotiations to end the bus boycott in 1955. "That Monday I went home with a heavy heart. I was weighed down by a terrible sense of guilt, remembering that on two or three occasions I had allowed myself to become angry and indignant. I had spoken hastily and resentfully. Yet I knew that this was no way to solve a problem. 'You must not harbor anger,' I admonished myself. 'You must be willing to suffer the anger of the opponent, and yet not return anger. You must not become bitter. No matter how emotional your opponents are, you must be calm.'" How do you think MLK was able to let go of his anger toward people who threatened him, cursed him, and would later bomb his house? (Romans 12:17-21, Proverbs 15:1)
3. Read Galatians 5:16-26. What does it look like when we let the Holy Spirit guide our lives? What does it look like when we don't?
4. When did you first realize that you are in process and God is gradually transforming the way you think and act so that you can reflect Jesus everywhere you go? (2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29) How is your "becoming like Jesus" transformation process going?
5. Read Romans 12:14. Why might Christians be unwilling to take the time necessary to investigate the possible needs/hurts of someone who has offended them in order to pray more effectively?
6. Discuss the following prayer of blessing from the Bible: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing: "May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace."'" Numbers 6:24-26 (NLT)

How does it make you feel to know that God instructed Aaron and his sons to pray this blessing over the people of Israel AFTER they deeply offended Him by building a golden calf idol and worshiping it? (Exodus 32)

7. Spend some time as a group praying for our church as well as Christians across America. Ask God to help us:
  - love offensive people
  - pray for God's blessing on people who don't deserve it
  - become ambassadors of grace, forgiveness, and new life through Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

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