

John Bevere Shares How You Can Avoid the Enemy's Most Deceptive Trap

As I travel across the United States ministering, I have been able to observe one of the enemy's most deadly and deceptive traps. It imprisons countless Christians, severs relationships and widens the existing breaches between us.

It is the trap of offense.

Many are unable to function properly in their callings because of the wounds and hurts that offenses have caused in their lives. They are handicapped and hindered from fulfilling their full potential. Most often it is a fellow believer who has hurt them. This causes the offense to feel like a betrayal. In Psalm 55:12-14 (NKJV) David laments, "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng."

They are those with whom we sit and sing worship songs, or perhaps it is the one who is delivering the sermon. We spend holidays, attend social functions and share offices with them. Or perhaps it is closer. We grow up with, confide in and sleep next to them. The closer the relationship, the more severe the offense! You find the greatest hatred among people who were once close.

The possibilities for offense are as endless as the list of relationships, no matter how complex or simple. This truth remains: Only those you care about can hurt you. You expect more from them—after all, you've given more of yourself to them. The higher the expectations, the greater the fall.

Selfishness reigns in our society. Men and women today look out for themselves to the neglect and hurt of those around them. This should not surprise us. The Bible is very clear that in the last days men will be “lovers of themselves” (2 Tim. 3:2a). We expect this in unbelievers, but Paul was not referring to those outside the church. He was talking about those within it. Many are wounded, hurt and bitter. They are offended! But they do not realize that they have fallen into Satan’s trap.

Is it our fault? Jesus made it very clear that it is impossible to live in this world and not have the opportunity to become offended. He declared, “‘It is impossible that no offenses should come’” (Luke 17:1b). Yet most believers are shocked, bewildered and amazed when it happens. We believe we are the only ones who have been wronged. This response leaves us vulnerable to a root of bitterness. Therefore we must be prepared and armed for offenses, because our response determines our future.

The Deceptive Trap

The Greek word for “offend” in Luke 17:1 comes from the word *skandalon*. This word originally referred to the part of a trap to which bait was attached. Hence the word signifies laying a trap in someone’s way. In the New Testament it often describes an entrapment used by the enemy. Offense is a tool of the devil to bring people into captivity. Paul instructed young Timothy:

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare [entrapment] of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Those who are in quarrels or opposition fall into a trap and are held prisoner to do the devil's will. Even more alarming, they are unaware of their captivity! Like the prodigal described in the Bible, they must come to themselves by awaking to their true condition. They do not realize that they are spewing out bitter waters rather than pure. When a person is deceived, he believes he is right even though he is not.

No matter what the scenario is, we can divide all offended people into two major categories: No. 1, those who have been treated unjustly, and No. 2, those who believe they have been treated unjustly. People in the second category believe with all their hearts that they have been wronged. Often their conclusions are drawn from inaccurate information. Or their information is accurate, but their conclusion is distorted. Either way, they hurt, and their understanding is darkened. They judge by assumption, appearance and hearsay.

The Heart's True Condition

One way the enemy keeps a person in an offended state is to keep the offense hidden, cloaked with pride. Pride will keep you from admitting your true condition. Once I was severely hurt by a couple of ministers. People would say, "I can't believe they did this to you. Aren't you hurt?" I would quickly respond, "No, I am fine. I'm not hurt." I knew it was wrong to be offended, so I denied and repressed it. I convinced myself I was not, but in reality I was. Pride masked the true condition of my heart.

Pride keeps you from dealing with truth. It distorts your vision. You never change when you think everything is fine. Pride hardens your heart and dims the eyes of your understanding. It keeps you from the change of heart—repentance—that will set you free. (See 2 Tim. 2:24-26.)

Pride causes you to view yourself as a victim. Your attitude becomes, "I was mistreated and misjudged; therefore, I am

justified in my behavior.” Because you believe you are innocent and falsely accused, you hold back forgiveness. Though your true heart condition is hidden from you, it is not hidden from God, and He does not grant you permission to hold on to an offense, even if you were truly mistreated. Two wrongs do not make a right!

When we see ourselves as victims and blame those who have hurt us, we become blind to our own sin. We struggle to remove the speck out of our brother’s eye while there is a log in ours. Jesus said our ability to see correctly is one key to being freed from deception. He counseled, “Anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (Rev. 3:18b). See what? Your true condition! That’s the only way we can “be zealous and repent” as Jesus commanded. You will only repent when you stop blaming other people and acknowledge the state of your own heart. Accepting the truth and repenting will bring freedom from offense. {eoa}

This article is excerpted from chapter 1 of The Bait of Satan by John Bevere.