

Joyce Meyer: How You Can Escape the Trap of Offense

It seems these days that people are easily offended by opinions or ways of thinking that they disagree with or simply don't understand. The result is often strife and anger that causes strained or damaged relationships.

Some offenses are minor, like someone cutting you off in traffic or taking a parking spot you were waiting on. Others are harder to overcome, such as a rude, critical comment from a close friend.

We need to understand that offense is one of Satan's greatest tools to steal our peace and keep us from the good things God has planned for our lives.

What Does "Offense" Really Mean?

The word "offense" comes from the Greek word *scandalon*; it literally describes a trap used to hold bait in order to lure animals.

Similarly, offense is the bait the enemy uses to trap us. He uses people's words and actions to get our minds churning and stir up our emotions. This is the bait that leads to situations filled with bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, hatred and revenge.

I often say that Satan sets us up to get us upset. He knows our weaknesses and what buttons to push to send us over the edge. The good news is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we can know the truth of God's Word and refuse to take his bait.

In other words, when somebody tries to give you offense, you can decide whether to take it or not.

The choice is yours to make.

I understand that choosing to not be offended is not easy, but we can refuse to be offended because God gives us self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23). This means we can control ourselves with God's help and take responsibility for how we respond to life's situations.

It's easy to blame someone else for our attitude, thinking, *If you didn't upset me, then I wouldn't feel this way* or *If you would just do this, then I would be happy*.

But the truth is we will never be free from any problem as long as we're blaming somebody else. I'm not saying other people don't do anything wrong; however, we can't control what everyone else does, but we can choose how we are going to react!

God's Love Is the Key

First Corinthians 13:5 (NIV) says love "is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." Love is a choice! I can choose to forgive and let it go, or I can hold on to the offense and let the hurt turn into something even worse.

For example, sometimes an offense starts out like a paper cut. It's seemingly small, but if you don't take care of it properly, it can begin to fester. In time, it can become infected and cause you a lot of pain.

I can tell you from personal experience that it's so much better to take care of a problem when it's little, before it has an opportunity to take root and turn into something more serious. I've learned that the quicker I can forgive somebody, the easier it's going to be. Sometimes this means being the first one to apologize and make peace—even if it's not my fault.

However, the more we do the right thing, the easier it gets. The quicker I forgive others and get rid of any offense, the more peace I have in my life. After a while, you realize that staying offended doesn't change other people or solve your problems—it only makes you bitter and angry.

I often say that staying mad at someone who has hurt you is like taking poison and hoping your enemy will die. You don't hurt them at all—you only hurt yourself!

Choose Peace, Not Offense

Psalm 34:14 (NIV) tells us to “seek peace and pursue it.” I've learned over the years (many times the hard way) just how valuable God's supernatural peace really is. Now, I absolutely refuse to live without it! It is so much greater than living with the toxic results of holding unforgiveness in my heart.

Opportunities to be offended will never go away, but we can grow wise to the enemy's tactics and learn how to respond in a godly way.

So, the next time you are tempted to be offended, don't take the bait! Always remember that you have a choice. You can choose to be angry and bitter ... or you can decide to forgive, believe the best of others and enjoy God's supernatural peace.

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