

# One of the Most Potent Tools the Enemy Uses to Steal Your Peace

Do you ever get offended? Has someone ever hurt your feelings, opening the door for strife, anger or a damaged relationship?

Every day, we are presented with multiple opportunities to get offended. It can be as minor as someone cutting us off in traffic or stealing our parking spot. Other times we can feel deeply hurt by a friend's rude or harsh comment.

What many people don't know is that offense is one of Satan's greatest tools to steal our peace and rob us of God's blessings.

The word "offense" comes from the Greek word *scandalon*. It is an interesting word that 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 will use people's words and actions to get our minds churning and stir up our emotions. He uses this bait to lure us into a lifetime of bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, strife, 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 we are smarter than our enemy because we have the mind of Christ! (1 Cor. 2:16.) We can know the truth of God's Word and don't have to take his bait.

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

You may be thinking, *Joyce, it's so hard not to take offense sometimes!* I understand how you feel, but we can refuse to be offended because God gives us self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit (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 deflect our problems and place the responsibility on someone else, 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!

First Corinthians 13:5 says love "is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs" (NIV). 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 experience that it's so much better to take care of a problem when it's little. It's good to address it as quickly as possible 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!

There were times when I would get upset with my husband, Dave, and let it ruin my entire day. I was determined to make him pay. If he was in the family room watching television, I would purposely not go in there, refusing to talk to him.

The problem was Dave didn't care. He would sit and watch sports and have a good time while I thought I was really "getting him back." He probably thought, *Good, I can get some quiet for a change!*

Psalm 34:14 tells us to "seek peace and pursue it" (NIV). 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.* {eoas}