

Summary

Offense is one of the greatest hindrances to the unity and love God desires for His people. Scripture teaches that love is not easily provoked, irritated, or offended, yet offense has become a major force weakening relationships in homes, churches, and the wider body of Christ. Proverbs 18:19 compares an offended person to a fortified city—walls up, trust guarded, reconciliation difficult. When a person is offended, reconciliation requires humility, intentionality, and persistent peacemaking to restore the relationship.

Jesus warned that in the end times many would be offended, betray one another, and hate one another, and we are witnessing this reality today—especially in a digital age where misinterpretation, quick reactions, and public division spread rapidly.

Because offense is the bait of Satan that traps the heart, believers must understand what causes it and deal with those areas honestly. Unmet expectations, pride, misunderstandings, miscommunication, and especially unhealed wounds all distort how we perceive others. Jesus's teaching in Matthew 7:1–5 shows that if we don't let the Holy Spirit deal with the "log" in our own eye, we misjudge, misread, and misinterpret people through our own issues, becoming easily offended. But when we allow Him to heal insecurities, past trauma, bitterness, and old rejection, we see others clearly, respond with patience, give the benefit of the doubt, and become much harder to offend. Overcoming offense is not optional—if we want to walk in love, preserve unity, and be a bride prepared for Jesus's return, we must refuse the bait and let God heal what's inside of us first.

The Apostle John: Love One Another

a) John In His Old Age

- According to church tradition (recorded by Jerome, Augustine, and especially Eusebius quoting Polycarp's contemporaries), the apostle John lived to be very old—likely into his 90s.
- He lived in Ephesus after returning from exile on Patmos.
- The elderly apostle would be carried into the church in Ephesus because he no longer had the strength to walk.
- When the time came for John to speak, the elders would lift him to his feet.
- All John would say was, "Little children, love one another."
- That was it. Week after week. The same words. No long sermon. No new revelation. Just the same quiet command.
- Eventually someone asked, "Master, why do you always say this? Why only this one thing?"
- John, the aged shepherd, answered gently: "Because it is the Lord's command. And if this alone is done, it is enough."
- In the end, after a lifetime of following Jesus, after visions of heaven and decades of defending the truth, John distilled Christianity down to its beating heart: Love one another.

b) What John Taught About Love in 1 John

- Love proves genuine salvation and relationship with God—showing we walk in the light, have passed from death to life, are born of God, and truly know Him (2:10; 3:14; 4:7–8).

- Love is the evidence that God abides in us—His love is perfected in us and casts out fear as we abide in Him (4:12, 16–18).
- Love flows from God’s own love for us—we love because He first loved us, and our love reflects His nature (4:10–11).
- Love must be demonstrated through action and self-sacrifice, not merely words or feelings (3:16–18).
- Love is the defining mark of true Christianity, proving our love for God and distinguishing true believers from false ones (4:20–21).

Offense Hinders Love

a) Offense Blocks Oneness

- Offense is one of the greatest hinderances to the oneness of the Spirit that defines the bride.
- Whether within a local church—where members take offense at one another—or across the global body of Christ, where division and fragmentation seem greater than ever, offense weakens the very unity the Spirit seeks to preserve among God’s people.

b) Love Is Not Easily Offended

- 1 Corinthians 13:5: Love “is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs” (NIV). I like to say that love is not easily offended.
- “Easily angered” is the Greek verb *paroxynetai*, which means:
 - to be provoked
 - to be stirred up emotionally
 - to be irritated
 - to be incited to anger
 - to flare up suddenly
- When we live in and walk in God’s love, we are not touchy, volatile, reactive, or prone to sudden offense.
- When we live in and walk in God’s love, we are not easily irritated, quick to snap, quick to flare up, quick to take offense, not do we hold on to offense for a prolonged period of time.
- When we live in and walk in God’s love, we aren’t thin-skinned, prone to interpret everything in the worst light, or carry a chip on our shoulders.

c) An Offended Person Is Difficult to Win

- Proverbs 18:19: “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.”
- In the ancient world, a strong city meant: thick walls; locked gates; watchtowers; trained guards; and defense strategies.

- To “take” a fortified city required: time; strategy; humility; negotiation; patience; persistence; and peacemaking.
- Solomon says: That is what it’s like to try to reconcile with someone who has been deeply hurt.
- Their heart goes into *defense mode*. Walls go up. Access is restricted. Trust becomes guarded.
- Reconciliation is possible—but it requires *more* effort, not less.
- When someone is deeply offended, they become guarded—like a city with walls up. If the hurt turns into ongoing conflict, those walls become iron bars. Restoring the relationship will take humility, intentionality, and persistent peacemaking.
- This proverb perfectly illustrates why being easily offended damages relationships and not dealing with offense quickly creates long-term barriers.
- Jesus echoes this in Matthew 5:23–24, where He tells believers to stop worshiping and go reconcile before the offense hardens into a fortified “citadel.”

Offense Increasing in the End Times

a) Many Will Be Offended

- In Matthew 24:3, the disciples asked Jesus when He would judge Jerusalem, what would be the sign of His coming, and what would be the sign of the end of the age.
- Matthew 24:10 contains part of His answer to their question: “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another” (NKJV).
- Jesus said that offense, betrayal, and hatred would define the end of the age.
- We are undoubtedly living in the times Jesus spoke about.

b) Offense Is on the Rise

- In our generation, we are witnessing a dramatic rise in offense—an unmistakable sign of the times Jesus warned about in Matthew 24:10.
- Nowhere is this more evident than in the digital age.
- Social media has created a breeding ground for offense—where every opinion, post, or comment can spark outrage, and people are quick to take sides, cancel others, and nurse resentment behind screens.
- Over the past five years especially, the spirit of offense has exploded: families have divided over politics, churches have fractured over secondary issues, and friendships have ended over careless words online.

The Bait of Satan

a) “Offended” Is Derived from *Skandalon* (a Noun)

- The Greek word for “offended” is *skandalizō*, which comes from *skandalon*.
- It’s the movable stick or trigger of a trap, a trap stick; a trap or snare.

- It's similar to the trigger on a mouse trap.

b) *Skandalizō* (a Verb)

- Means to spring a trap or put a stumbling block or impediment in the way, upon which another may trip and fall.
- Metaphorically to cause someone to sin, to offend, or to turn away from faith.
- *Skandalizō* means to ensnare the heart or cause spiritual downfall, either by leading someone into sin or by provoking them to offense, doubt, or rejection.

c) The Bait of Satan

- Picture a mouse trap:
 - The *skándalon* is the yellow trigger that you put the bait on.
 - Offense is the bait to lure the mouse, whether cheese, peanut butter, or marshmallow cream.
 - When the mouse tries to eat it, the trap springs shut. That moment of taking the bait and becoming trapped is *skandalizō*.
- Spiritually, offense is the bait, the hurt or disappointment we choose to hold onto.
- When we take it, the trap closes—and our heart becomes ensnared in bitterness, unbelief, or sin.
- Offenses are unavoidable, but being trapped by them is optional.

What Causes Offense

Note: In talking about offense in this message, I am not talking about abuse, whether physical, verbal, or sexual. That would be an entirely different message and conversation.

a) Unmet Expectations

- "I thought they would treat me better," "I thought God would come through by now."
- Expecting people or God to meet needs that only God's timing and purpose can fulfill.
- Friendship Expectations
 - *Expectation*: They'll check on me when I'm going through something.
 - *Reality*: They never called or texted.
 - *Offense*: They must not care about me.
 - Unspoken expectations create hurt because the person didn't even know what you needed.
- Marriage Expectations
 - *Expectation*: My spouse will know what I need without me saying it.
 - *Reality*: They didn't notice, didn't help, or were distracted.
 - *Offense*: They never think about me; they don't really love me.

- Often rooted in assumptions—never communicated, but deeply felt.
- Example: Me not washing the cars every weekend; Angie not cooking gourmet meals every night.
- Church Expectations
 - *Expectation*: The people at church should respond in a certain way when I am struggling.
 - *Reality*: No one did what you thought they should do if they really loved you.
 - *Offense*: They never think about me; they don't really love me; my church doesn't value me. I'm just a number here.
 - A major cause of church hurt: people get offended over expectations the church didn't even know existed.

b) Pride or Self-Importance

- Pride makes us *easily wounded*. When self-image or reputation is challenged, offense rises quickly.
- Example: Dad editing my books many years ago; Angie saying I was tense and not intense in my preaching.

c) Misunderstanding, Miscommunication, or Misperception

- Offense often begins not from what was done, but from what was *perceived*.
- The enemy thrives in the space between *what was meant* and *what was heard*.
- The Missed Greeting
 - *What happened*: Someone walked past you at church without saying hello.
 - *Perception*: "They're ignoring me... I must have done something wrong. . . they must not like me."
 - *Reality*: They didn't see you, or were preoccupied.
 - *Offense*: A simple oversight becomes a relational wound.
- The Unanswered Text
 - *What happened*: You send a thoughtful message—they don't reply.
 - *Perception*: "They're upset with me... they're avoiding me. . . they don't like me."
 - *Reality*: They got busy, forgot, or planned to respond later.
 - *Offense*: Silence is interpreted as rejection.
- The Tone That Was Misread
 - *What happened*: Someone responds briefly or with a blunt tone.
 - *Perception*: "They're being rude or disrespectful."

- *Reality*: They were tired, stressed, or in a hurry.
- *Offense*: Tone becomes a trigger—even when no offense was intended.
- The Looks and Body Language
 - *What happened*: Someone looks frustrated while you're talking. Or they look at you with a scowl on their face.
 - *Perception*: "They're annoyed with me. They don't like me."
 - *Reality*: They're thinking about something completely unrelated. They have an intense resting face.
 - *Offense*: We interpret expressions instead of asking questions.

d) Unhealed Wounds and Past Hurts

- People with unresolved pain interpret new situations through old lenses.
- A small slight reopens deep wounds, producing disproportionate reaction (Heb 12:15 — "root of bitterness").
- Learning to Deal with Our Own Issues First (Matt. 7:1-5)
 - Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:1–5 is one of the most important passages on emotional and relational maturity.
 - He tells us not to judge one another with harsh, condemning judgment.
 - But then He gives a vivid, almost humorous illustration: a man with a *log* sticking out of his eye trying to help his brother remove a tiny *speck*.
 - The picture is intentionally exaggerated—Jesus wants us to laugh at it, because it exposes how ridiculous we can be when we are blind to our own issues.
- Deal Honestly with Yourself First
 - Jesus isn't forbidding discernment. He's not saying we should never speak truth or help one another grow.
 - What He's saying is this: You can't see clearly until you let God deal with what's in you first.
 - Before you try to fix someone else, deal honestly with yourself.
 - And this is exactly where offense becomes so dangerous.
 - If you have unhealed wounds . . .
 - If you have insecurities you haven't overcome . . .
 - If you have pride you haven't confronted . . .
 - If you have trauma you haven't processed . . .
 - If you have bitterness you haven't released . . .

Then you are seeing people—not as they really are—but through the filter of your own issues.

- And when that happens...
 - A neutral comment feels like criticism.
 - A simple oversight feels like rejection.
 - A normal tone sounds like hostility.
 - A boundary feels like control.
 - A short pause feels like abandonment.
- The problem isn't what they did—it's the log in our own eye distorting everything we see.
- Jesus says, *"First remove the log from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*
- The Order Is Vital
 - Notice the order:
 - First: let the Holy Spirit deal with you.
 - Then: you will have clear vision, compassion, humility, and gentleness to help others.
 - If we skip the first step, we misjudge, misread, and misinterpret.
 - If we skip the first step, we become easily offended.
 - If we skip the first step, we create unnecessary conflict.
 - But when we allow God to deal with our inner issues, something beautiful happens:
 - We see people more accurately.
 - We respond more patiently.
 - We give the benefit of the doubt.
 - We don't assume the worst.
 - We become harder to offend.
 - Clarity comes when the heart is clean.
 - Love grows when the log is removed.
 - Unity flourishes when we see others without distortion.
- Overcoming Offense Is Not Optional
 - Dealing with our inner life is not optional—especially in the end-time church, where offense will be one of the enemy's greatest weapons.
 - If we want to walk in love...If we want to preserve unity...If we want to be a bride prepared...We must let Jesus heal what's inside of us before we try to fix what's inside of someone else.

- The Childhood Rejection Wound
 - *Past Wound:* Growing up feeling unwanted or overlooked.
 - *New Situation:* Someone forgets to greet them or walks past without noticing.
 - *Reaction:* Deep hurt—“I’m invisible again... nobody cares.”
 - *Why:* A tiny oversight touches an old wound of rejection.
- The Betrayed-By-a-Friend Wound
 - *Past Wound:* A trusted friend betrayed a confidence years ago.
 - *New Situation:* A friend forgets to text back or cancels plans.
 - *Reaction:* “I can’t trust anyone... people always let me down.”
 - *Why:* A minor disappointment feels like major betrayal.
- The Church Hurt Wound
 - *Past Wound:* A previous church had controlling or manipulative leaders.
 - *New Situation:* A pastor corrects something or sets a boundary.
 - *Reaction:* “They’re just like my old leaders.”
 - *Why:* A healthy boundary is interpreted as spiritual abuse.
- The Marriage or Relationship Trauma
 - *Past Wound:* A spouse or partner used harsh tones or criticism.
 - *New Situation:* Someone speaks quickly or firmly.
 - *Reaction:* “They’re attacking me.”
 - *Why:* The tone triggers memories of emotional pain.
- The “Never Good Enough” Wound
 - *Past Wound:* Growing up with constant criticism or perfectionism.
 - *New Situation:* A leader offers gentle feedback.
 - *Reaction:* “They don’t value anything I do. I am basically worthless.”
 - *Why:* The heart hears old voices instead of present reality.
- The Abandonment Wound
 - *Past Wound:* A parent leaving, divorce, or major relational breakup.
 - *New Situation:* A friend doesn’t show up or forgets a commitment.
 - *Reaction:* “Everyone leaves me.”
 - *Why:* A small failure feels like abandonment all over again.

- The Public Embarrassment Wound
 - *Past Wound:* Being mocked or laughed at publicly.
 - *New Situation:* Someone chuckles at a comment they made.
 - *Reaction:* “They’re making fun of me!”
 - *Why:* Humor is interpreted as humiliation.
- The Shame Wound
 - *Past Wound:* Years of feeling ashamed or inferior.
 - *New Situation:* Someone gives advice or correction.
 - *Reaction:* “They think I’m stupid.”
 - *Why:* Shame reinterprets the meaning of harmless words.
- The Family Favoritism Wound
 - *Past Wound:* Always feeling like the “less favored” child.
 - *New Situation:* Someone else gets recognized or thanked publicly.
 - *Reaction:* “Here we go again—I’m overlooked.”
 - *Why:* Old comparison patterns resurface.
- The Spiritual Disappointment Wound
 - *Past Wound:* A painful season where God felt distant or was disciplining.
 - *New Situation:* Someone else receives a blessing or breakthrough.
 - *Reaction:* “God forgets me. He loves them but not me.”
 - *Why:* The present moment hits an old bruise.
- The Authoritarian Leader Wound
 - *Past Wound:* Grew up under a harsh, controlling parent or husband, or came from a spiritually abusive church where authority was used to intimidate or dominate.
 - *New Situation:* A healthy leader asks for a meeting, offers correction, gives simple direction, accidentally overlooks you, doesn’t speak in a gentle tone, or looks at you the wrong way.
 - *Reaction:* “They’re trying to intimidate and control me... this is just like before.”
 - *Why:* Normal leadership and healthy accountability are interpreted through old trauma, causing the person to see any authority as unsafe, intimidating, controlling, or oppressive.