

Life Lessons

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Living Free of Offenses

Have you ever been offended? No matter how perfect we live, we all are faced with offenses. Maybe someone ignores you in the church. Maybe someone cheats you out of a promotion. Maybe your spouse doesn't understand how hard you work to pay the bills or you feel overwhelmed not getting any help on the home front. No matter what, offenses will come. **How we deal with offenses will determine the quality of our lives.**

Offense comes from a Greek word meaning, --"bait." It was used in the context of luring animals into a trap. I remember in the early years of my traveling ministry how I used to get offended at the smallest gesture of questioning by airport and immigration officers. Traveling on an Indian passport wasn't easy back in those days. I had to fight through incredible opposition to obtain a visa or an airline ticket to fly. I felt discriminated against. So, when an airline employee or an immigration officer questioned me, I would interpret that as a personal insult. Now, I realize that it really wasn't their fault. **It was my own insecurity working as a bait to lure me into an offense. Since then I learned, anytime I see more negative in people than positive, I'm the one who needs to change!**

If you struggle dealing with offenses as I used to, one of the best things you can do is to forgive quickly. **Understand that the real enemy is working behind the scene trying to lure you into the trap.** Have you ever read the directions on a stain remover? The directions will tell you to get to the stain as quickly as possible, preferably while it is still fresh. Why? Because **the longer you let that stain sit the harder it gets to remove it.** It's the same with the "stains" of our minds and hearts. The longer we allow the offense to sit, the more we replay that offense in our mind the harder it becomes to forgive which eventually turns into a root of bitterness.

Recently I heard a story about Joe who was bitten by a dog. He was rushed to the doctor and told that he tested positive for rabies. Joe immediately began to write down a list. The doctor

said, "Oh no sir, you're not going to die. We've got vaccine for it. You don't have to write out your will." Joe replied, "No sir, this is not my will, these are all the people I'm going to bite!" **Don't try to pay people back. Just let it go!**

Practical Steps You Can Take:

- 1. Check your own heart.** When you hear an offensive remark, check your own heart. Could there be something with you? The Bible says if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. (Matt. 7:1).
- 2. Learn to forgive quickly.** Give people the benefit of the doubt. Remember, God treats your trespasses in the same manner you treat others. (Matt. 18:35).
- 3. Stop pressing the Replay button.** When we're offended we tend to play the offense in our mind over and over. Resist the temptation to relive it, instead press the delete button. Do the same with cell phone messages, emails or letters that have offended you. Refuse to go back to them, and stop contemplating how you can get your revenge. (Phil. 4:8).
- 4. Be slow to respond.** You'll be amazed how your feelings will change if you allow 23 hours to respond. James 1:19.
- 5. Show mercy.** People have deep wounds, bad days and multiple problems. If you had any idea what the person was going through behind the scenes, you'd never have taken offense in the first place. When you show mercy, it lets them know there's a God who cares, even in their imperfection. (Eph. 5:1-2).

Friend, anybody can lash out. Anybody can make a sarcastic remark. You can either lower yourself down to their level or lift the standard for them to come up higher. Instead of calling a friend and ask their take on it, forgive, show mercy and pray for the offender, remembering, you too need forgiveness.