

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

“It is impossible that no offenses should come.” – Luke 17:1

I. OFFENSE WILL COME

- a) Offense is the number one trap of the enemy.
- b) Offense imprisons & severs relationships.
- c) Offense hinders us from fulfilling our God given potential.
- d) Most often it's those closest to us that offend us.

“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 of my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet council together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.” (Psalm 55:12-14)

- a) Offense comes to us by those closest to us.
- b) The closer the relationship the more severe the offense.
- c) Our expectations of those closest to us are higher than strangers. So the hurt is greater than those who we don't know.
- d) Many people walk around wounded, hurt and bitter...*offended*.

II. OFFENSE IS A TRAP OF THE ENEMY

- a) The Greek word for offend (Luke 17:1) is 'skandalon', which refers to a trap. The word Offense signifies *“laying a trap for someone”*.
- b) Offense is a trap used by the enemy to bring people into captivity.
- c) Most people are **unaware** that they are in captivity.

A.) Offended people can be drawn into two categories.

1. First- *those who have been treated unjustly*.
2. Secondly- *Those who believe with all their hearts that they have been wronged*. Often the conclusions are drawn from inaccurate information. Or their information is accurate, but

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

their conclusion is distorted. Either way, they hurt and their understanding is darkened. They judge by assumption, appearance, and hearsay.

III. END TIME OFFENSE

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:10-13)

- a) Offense is a sign of the end times. We are living in the end times. We have to be aware this is going on right now. I believe this is the number one weapon of the enemy that is not outright captivity.
- b) Many will be offended...not few, not some, but many.
- c) Those who will be offended are Christians.

IV. WALLS OF PROTECTION

“A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.” (Proverbs 18:19)

- a) An offended brother or sister is harder to win than a fortified city.
- b) Strong cities have walls around them. They keep unwelcome inhabitants and invaders out. Walls are placed as a means of protection.
- c) We construct walls when we are hurt to safeguard our hearts and prevent from any future wounds.
- d) The focus of an offended Christian is inward and introspective. We guard our rights and personal relationships carefully, many times leaving us lonely.
- e) Hurt people become more and more self-seeking and self-contained.
- f) An offended Christian is one who takes in life, but because of fear, cannot release life. As a result, even the life that does come in becomes stagnant within the wall or prison of offense.
- g) Offended people will find Scripture to back their positions, but it is not the correct division of God’s Word. This usually will cause us to justify ourselves rather than repent of the unforgiveness.

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

- h) God attempts to develop character in us through opposition, but because of self-preservation it is often abandoned.

V. BETRAYAL

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.”

(Matthew 24:10)

- a) Offense has a progression. Starts at offense and moves into betrayal and then ultimately hate.
- b) Walls are built for protection. Self-preservation at all costs. This makes us capable of betrayal. We betray usually with someone we have a relationship with.
- c) Betrayal is the ultimate abandonment of covenant.
- d) Maintaining an offense keeps us from seeing our own character flaws because blame is deferred to another.
- e) When betrayal occurs relationship cannot be restored unless genuine repentance follows.
- f) Betrayal then leads to hatred with serious consequences. The Bible states clearly that anyone who hates his brother is a murderer and that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:15)

VI. PRIDE- THE CONDITION OF THE HEART

- a) One way the enemy keeps an offended person in an offended place is to keep the offense hidden and cloaked in pride.
- b) Pride will keep us from looking at our true heart condition.
- c) Pride causes us to view ourselves as victims.
- d) Because an offended person believes they were treated unjustly, they hold back forgiveness.
- e) Being mistreated does not give us permission to hold an offense.
- f) The Greek word translated pride is *‘tuphoo’*. Its literal meaning is “*to envelop in smoke*,” but metaphorically, it indicates “conceit,” “lifted up,” and “high mindedness.” The word

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

pictures a person using smoke as a screen to conceal the image he does not want the public to see.

VI. OFFENSE LEADS TO GOSSIP

“To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.” (Proverbs 8:13)

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

- a) Gossip is the watering cistern for bitterness to take root in our hearts.
- b) Gossip tries to gather people on our side, instead of releasing and forgiving.
- c) God HATES perverse speech. His stance is strong against perverse speech.
- d) Through Gossip we come into agreement with the enemy who is the accuser of the brother. (Job 1:8, Rev. 12). God’s posture is *gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.* (Psalm 145:8-9) *“Its His kindness that leads us to repentance.”* (Romans 2:4)

VII. KEYS TO FORGIVENESS

1.) KEY #1 – CHOOSE TO FORGIVE!

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespass. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:24-26)

- a) A person who cannot forgive has forgotten how great a debt God has forgiven them.
- b) If we do not forgive, our prayers will be hindered.
- c) If we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven our trespasses.

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

- d) The enemy has a foothold in our lives and likes to have you hold this in your heart. Unforgiveness can be “home” for evil strongholds. Satan wants our weaknesses to escalate to wickedness. Satan adds a demonic energy to our weakness so that we act-it-out giving him more access.

2.) KEY #2 – HOW MANY TIMES DO WE FORGIVE?

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-21)

- a) We are to forgive as God does, without limits.
- b) In the book of Luke it says to forgive 70 x 7 daily. (Luke 17:4)

3.) KEY #3 – EXERCISE FORGIVENESS

“And herin do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.” (Acts 24:16 KJV)

- a) It takes great effort to stay free from offense.
- b) You grow more from the most challenging offenses- the ones from which you have not been trained.
- c) The greek word in Acts 24:16 for excises is *askeo*. Vines Expository Dictionary defines exercise as “*to take pains, endeavor, exercise by training or discipline.*”
- d) We have to condition our heart to not take offense and to release forgiveness every day, all of the time, in every situation.

4.) KEY #4 – RESPONDING TO ONE WHO IS OFFENDED

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify one another.” (Romans 14:19)

- a) We are to maintain an attitude of pursuing peace through humility at the expense of our pride. It is the only way to see true reconciliation.
- b) Standing up for ourselves and “*our rights*” will never bring true peace.

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

- c) Walk in humility and pursue peace!
- d) Pride defends. Humility agrees and says, “*You are right. I have acted this way. Please forgive me.*”

“But wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17)

- e) Godly wisdom is willing to yield. It is not stiff necked or stubborn.
- f) We must be willing to yield or defer to the other persons viewpoint as long as it does not violate truth.

TWO HEART RESPONSES WHEN BEING ACCUSED:

- 1.) Keep mouth closed- if we don’t agree- let them know we respect what they said and will search our attitude and intentions. And then sincerely search our hearts. Tell them sorry for hurting them.
- 2.) If they are accurate in their assessment- Humble yourself to promote reconciliation.

5.) KEY #5 – CONFRONTING WHEN OFFENDED

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

- a) A *peacekeeper* avoids confrontation at all costs to maintain peace, even at the risk of compromising truth. But its not true peace.
- b) A *peacemaker* will go in love and confront, bringing truth so that resulting reconciliation will endure. A peacemaker refuses to hide in offense with a political smile. He makes peace with bold love that cannot fail.
- c) We should not go to a brother who has offended us until we have decided to forgive him from our hearts – no matter how he responds to us. We need to get rid of any feelings of animosity toward him before approaching him.
- d) We are to go to our brother, but not to bring condemnation, but reconciliation. God does not want us to go to our brother and tell them how horrible they are. Our goal is to remove the breach of preventing the restoration of our relationship.
- e) Are we willing to lay down our self preservation and die to pride in order to be restored to the one who has offended us?

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

6.) KEY #6 – DO IT QUICKLY!

“Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny..” (Matthew 5:25-26)

- a) The longer offense stays in our hearts, we open the door for offense to fester and become a root of bitterness.
- b) Take care of this quickly and *“in your anger do not sin”*: *do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*” (Ephesians 4:26)
- c) We quickly “settle out of court” which speaks of getting free from bitterness before allowing emotional pressures escalate. Our hearts are injured in a far worse way by bitterness than by the person that opposed us. Jesus did not appeal to the nobility of integrity but to our “sanctified selfishness” by avoiding the prison of toxic emotions.

7.) KEY #7 – MOST OFFENSES ARE PETTY & PERCEIVED

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8)

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (Philippians 1:9-11)

- a) Most offenses are perceived, they are not real. Our enemy can bring thoughts to us that are false or exaggerated, we perceive them to be real and if we believe the lie, we can carry offense against our brothers.
- b) The love of God is the key to freedom from the trap of offense. This must be an abounding love, a love that continually grows and is strengthened in our hearts.
- c) The love that will keep us from stumbling lays down its life selfishly – even for the goof of an enemy. When we walk in this kind of love, we will not be seduced into taking the enemies lies and traps.

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

d) Love never fails!!

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:3-5)

e) We first must check our own heart and make sure we are not picking the speck in our own eye, when we have a large plank blocking our view.

VII. TAKING ACTION

- a) The Spirit of the Lord may have reminded you of relationships in the past or present, which you have held something against others.
- b) Its time to pray and ask the Lord.
- c) Release these people from blame for what they have done to you, picture each of them individually. Forgive each person. Cancel the debt they owe you.
- d) Pray this:

“Father, in the name of Jesus, I acknowledge that I have sinned against You by not forgiving those who have offended me. I repent of this and ask Your forgiveness.

I also acknowledge my inability to forgive them apart from you. Therefore, from my heart I choose to forgive (insert their names- release each one individually). I bring under the blood of Jesus all that they have done wrong to me. They no longer owe me anything. I remit their sins against me.

Heavenly Father, as my Lord Jesus asked You to forgive those who had sinned against Him, I pray that Your forgiveness will come to those who have sinned against me. I ask that You will bless them and lead them into a closer relationship with you. Amen.

- e) Write these names down that you have released.
- f) You may have to exercise to stay free from offense.
- g) Make a commitment to pray for them as you would pray for yourself.

LIVING FREE OF OFFENSE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

- h) When you know your heart is strong and settled, go to them. Remember that you are going for the purpose of reconciliation for their benefit, not your own. By doing this you will seal the victory. You will win a brother (Matthew 18:15)