



*Forgiveness and
Emotional Healing*

A BIBLE STUDY WITH
ANDY MILLER

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and to grow stronger, together.



WEEK 1

I'M
OFFENDED

Then He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!

LUKE 17:1

In 2020, our congregation purchased an old church building that had been vacant for several years. We had a big vision to clean up the building and prepare it to once again host the saints of God and be a beacon of hope in our community. We rolled up our sleeves and began to tear up old flooring, paint walls, and do some minor renovation here and there so it would better suit our needs. But it didn't take long before we realized that we were not the only inhabitants of our new building. A raccoon had made his home in the attic and was probably convinced that our leftover pizza and snacks that we left laying around after our workdays was our way of trying to build a relationship with him – not so much! One night I went to the church and set out a live trap and baited him with his favorite hand-tossed meat lovers from Pizza Hut and sure enough, by the next morning, he was caught! The trap worked perfectly - he couldn't resist the bait, triggered the switch on the floor that slammed the door shut behind him and he was caught, completely under our control.

Offense works almost exactly like that trap. The Greek word for offense is “skandalon” which literally refers to that trigger hidden in the floor of the trap that caused our attic trespasser to lose his freedom. Many times we mistake the words that people say or the way they make us feel for the offense when that is actually just the bait. The offense comes when we take the bait, allowing it to become part of our reality –

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consuming our hearts and thoughts, and in turn, the door of the trap slams shut behind us stealing our freedom and begins a process of emotional, physical, and spiritual imprisonment.

Perhaps you have noticed patterns of the “bait” that the enemy commonly sets in front of you in an attempt to trap you in offense. Maybe it’s rejection, comparing yourself with

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others, the words people say (or don’t say), or even imaginations of what others may think about you. In Luke 17:1, Jesus told his disciples, “...it is impossible that no offenses should come...”, then in Proverbs 12:16 (NLT), we’re told that “... if you refuse to take offense, you demonstrate discretion”. These verses make it clear that while the bait of offense may be inevitable, a person who lives a life well aware of the schemes of the enemy can make a determination not to take the bait and in turn, not give in to the trap of offense.

It’s also important for us to know that the danger of offense doesn’t stop with being trapped. Actually, that’s just the beginning of Satan’s game plan. Jesus, when speaking of the end times in Matthew 24, says this in verse 10, “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.” Satan isn’t satisfied with offense simply being present in people’s lives. He wants that spirit of offense to develop into betrayal and even hate towards one another – especially amongst God’s people! There is nothing that he loves more than to create disunity and disharmony within families, relationships, and within the body of Christ and so often he uses offense to spark that disunity.

In case you’re wondering, the raccoon that I was talking about earlier ended up with a pretty happy ending. My daughters insisted that I let it go and not kill it like I had

planned, so we took him out of town and released him in the woods. The sad thing is a lot of Christians don't get out of their trap of offense quite as easily. They've fallen for the bait and have become entrapped in offense – sometimes layers and layers of offense and it's grown so deep that they're not even sure where to start to begin searching for freedom and healing. Over the next couple of chapters, we'll talk about some of the most common obstacles in overcoming offense, but we could summarize it all in just one word: forgiveness. Easier said than done, right? We'll talk about that more in our next session, but as we close for now, here are some discussion questions to continue the conversation...

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Personal Reflection: Are you able to identify patterns of “bait” that commonly tempts you to take an offense?_____

Between you and God: Are you currently carrying offenses that are difficult for you to let go of? If so, have you noticed them progressing into disunity and isolation? What is the specific part of that offense that is the most difficult to release?_____

In the Word: In Acts 24:16 (KJV), Paul said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offense toward God, and toward men.” What are some practical ways that we can ‘exercise ourselves’ to be void of offense?_____



WEEK 2

FORGIVENESS VS RECONCILIATION

Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another,
if anyone has a complaint against another;
even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

COLOSSIANS 3:13

Parenting is one of the greatest joys in life, but also one of the hardest things that I've ever experienced. I love observing my friends who have children older than mine and learning Kingdom principles from them that I can apply in my own journey as a father. Let me share a true story with you that is one of the most powerful things I've ever experienced illustrating that God's ways work!

The daughter of a friend of mine was being bullied in high school. There was a particular young man who seemed to target this young lady and on a daily basis, would go out of his way to make her life miserable. This continued until she came home and told her dad that she was done attending that school and that he needed to enroll her somewhere else. My friend is a Kingdom man and believes God is who He says He is, so we went to the Word for direction and came across Matthew 5:44 that says, "...bless those who curse you...". He encouraged his daughter to go to school the next day and when that young man comes around to cause more issues to look him in the eye, call him by name, and tell him, "I bless you in the name of Jesus". You can imagine the hesitation that a girl in high school may have after receiving such an instruction, but her dad was so certain that God is true to His word that he told her if it doesn't work, she could ignore everything else that he ever tells her. To make a long story short, the daughter was obedient to her father and spoke blessing to the bully the next day at school. That was the last day that he caused problems – actually her decision to handle the situation God's way caused such a change in the boy that instead of bullying her, he was the one that helped her open her locker when it jammed. In this

story, the two students never ended up becoming great friends, but the girl's willingness to align her response to the bait of offense with God's Word literally gave her freedom and changed the situation entirely.

Forgiveness is a cornerstone of Christian living. Yet, amidst its profound significance, forgiveness often tightly intertwines with the concept of reconciliation, sometimes requiring some clarification of their relationship. As believers, it's so important to understand that forgiveness and reconciliation are two distinct journeys toward healing and restoration, and forgiveness doesn't always include reconciliation. As followers of Christ, we're mandated to forgive as we've been forgiven (Colossians 3:13). Actually a better way to say it is that as believers, we have given up our right not to forgive. We no longer have a choice. It's

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a commandment etched into the essence of our faith. When we extend forgiveness, we mirror God's grace and reflect His identity. And in doing so, we also release our offender from owing us something for what they've done. Forgiving them doesn't mean that what they did was acceptable, it simply means that you are no longer going to allow their actions to hold you back. You're relinquishing the unfulfilled revenge.

While reconciliation is always a wonderful pursuit, it involves the restoration of a broken relationship which is a two-way street. It's the journey toward rebuilding trust, fostering understanding, and nurturing harmony. Forgiveness is something you can choose on your own and it benefits you. Reconciliation, which benefits both you and them, requires effort on their part as well. Sadly, not everyone is willing or ready to put forth that effort – or at least not in the moment. Forgiveness, however, transcends reconciliation; it's a personal journey of healing and wholeness. When we choose to forgive, we release ourselves from the shackles of bitterness and resentment, and the power that the offender holds over us becomes powerless.

If reconciliation doesn't seem possible, don't let that hold you back from forgiveness. Choosing to align your response with God's Word will always lead to victory in every area. As we bring this chapter to a close, here are some discussion questions to consider...

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Personal Reflection: Are there offenses that you have harbored in your heart instead of forgiving? Many times we do this because we want the person that hurt us to feel hurt just like they made us feel. What keeps you from forgiving those who have wronged you and fully releasing them? _____

Between you and God: Jesus extended forgiveness to you before you told Him, "I'm sorry." Are you willing to allow the same grace to be released in your life toward others? Or are you waiting for them to make the first move? _____

In the Word: Matthew 5:43-48 call us to love, bless, and pray for those who have wronged us. Is there anything standing in the way of you doing that? _____



WEEK 3

WHEN TRUST IS BROKEN

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

PSALM 34:18

Allow me to be a little vulnerable with you during this session... One of the most difficult seasons in my Christian life, and particularly in ministry, was when my trust was shattered by a mentor. This was a man that I looked up to, honored highly, and spent years working under his leadership. Seemingly overnight, there were some devastating accusations that were raised against me and before I knew it, I was being pushed out of my areas of responsibilities with instructions to tell the people around me that my departure was of my own volition. I had no recourse, no ability to get clarity, life as I knew it was just over. Relationships were broken, lies were being spread, it was a mess. If I couldn't trust this man, who could I trust!?

In the tapestry of human relationships, trust serves as a fragile thread, challenging to develop and easy to break. Whether shattered by deceit, broken promises, or abandonment, the wounds of broken trust cut deep, leaving scars that linger long after the pain is gone. Yet, amidst the shattered trust, the redemptive power of God's love and the promise of restoration starts to shine. As followers of Christ, we are not immune to the pain of broken trust. Consider the story of Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery out of jealousy and spite. Despite enduring years of hardship and injustice, Joseph chose to forgive his brothers, declaring, "You intended to harm me, but

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God intended it for good,” (Genesis 50:20). Through Joseph’s story, we witness the profound truth that even in the midst of betrayal, God can work all things together for good.

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The journey of recovering from broken trust begins with honesty - a willingness to confront the pain and acknowledge the wounds that have been inflicted. It requires vulnerability - a willingness to lay our hearts bare before God and others, trusting that He will meet us in our brokenness. It demands humility - a willingness to extend grace to those who have wronged us. Recovering from broken trust requires patience - a recognition that healing takes time and that true restoration cannot be rushed. It’s a journey marked by small victories and setbacks, yet guided by the steadfast promise of God’s

presence. As the psalmist declares, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). In our moments of weakness and doubt, God is ever-present, offering comfort, strength, and hope.

Ultimately, the journey of recovering from broken trust leads us to a place of redemption - a place where brokenness is transformed into beauty, and wounds become scars of grace. It’s a journey that testifies to the resilience of the human spirit and the faithfulness of a God who makes all things new. As the prophet Isaiah proclaims, “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19). In the wilderness of broken trust, God is at work, making a way where there seems to be no way, and bringing forth streams of living water to quench our thirsty souls. He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

I believe with my whole heart that many times, in the moments where trust has been shattered and life feels like its foundation is being shaken, that God is at work – perhaps uprooting us to relocate us where He wants us to be, or maybe positioning us for the next assignment He has for us, maybe even restoring what the enemy has tried to steal. I love the words that David spoke in Psalm 37:25, “I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” While David was likely referring to physical provision, his general message was showcasing the faithfulness of God – reminding us that God is always looking out for and taking care of His people. He has never, and will never forsake the righteous. My friend, that’s you. Trust may have been shattered, but let me tell you – God’s fighting for you. Don’t give up, let Him do it.

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Personal Reflection: Has there been a time in your life when your trust was shattered? What did you observe God doing for you in that time? _____

Between you and God: Perhaps you're in a season of waiting for God to move. Don't lose focus on His faithfulness. In your quiet time with the Lord, make a list of the times when He has come through for you. _____

In the Word: Romans 12:17-19 remind us that we don't have to take matters into our own hands, but that God actually fights our battles for us. Take a moment to tell God that you trust Him in this season. _____





WEEK 4

THE JOURNEY OF HEALING

Confess your trespasses to one another,
and pray for one another, that you may be healed.
The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

JAMES 5:16

If anyone in scripture had an understanding of difficulties, challenges, and opportunities to be offended, it was the Apostle Paul. Time and time again, his life was threatened due to his commitment to the faith. I'm always struck by his words to the Corinthians when he told them that he is grateful for all that he went through because it gave them an opportunity to see their prayers answered. What a powerful perspective and a great reminder that there is purpose in everything. As we come to our final session and look at the "Journey of Healing," let's allow our primary focus to be on the purpose of the journey, and even the purpose of the obstacles that we may face in life. We may not always have a clear picture of how God intends to use those seasons of life to stir faith inside someone else's heart or even draw them back to Him as they watch your journey. Keeping your focus on Him will help the plans of God to be fulfilled.

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I want to take a little bit of a different style and share five verses with you that contain life-changing principles that I believe, if we keep them at the forefront of our focus, will have a huge influence on our journey of healing. Here are those verses:

Matthew 11:28-29, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

The first verse tells us where we need to be – with Him. It’s an invitation to come near Him and walk with Him. And not only to walk with Him, but to be yoked together with Him. That means that no matter how hard the winds of life may blow, when we are yoked together with Jesus, they cannot take us off course.

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2 Corinthians 10:5, *“Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”*

This second verse deals with our thought life. Satan will continually attempt to distract us or hinder our wholeness by sending thoughts that are not beneficial or right. In this verse from 2 Corinthians 10, we’re instructed to take those thoughts captive and not allow them to take root in our spirits.

James 5:16, *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*

In James, we find another powerful verse that will prove instrumental in our healing journey – it’s the concept of community and accountability. God created us to be together and to be there for one another. When we confess our shortcomings and pray with each other, that honesty, vulnerability, and oneness of heart opens doors for healing to flow powerfully!

Luke 22:31-32, *“And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”* This is another one of my favorite passages. Jesus is telling Simon Peter that Satan requested

permission to “sift” or separate him, but that Jesus Himself prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail. First, we’re reminded here that Satan is required to ask for permission before messing with God’s people, and secondly, Jesus is not only well aware of the situation, but he is praying for Peter that he would remain faithful and strong. I have no doubt that Jesus has the same passionate desire for you as well.

Proverbs 4:23, *“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”*

And finally, the final verse that I’d like to share with you comes from Proverbs 4 where we are told to guard or protect our hearts because out of our hearts, the issues of life flow. What sound advice! Protect your heart from what you allow to enter it, protect it from the thoughts that try to enter it, protect it from the “advice” it receives. Guard your heart with all diligence.

And above all, remain focused on the purpose. Regardless of what life may be throwing your way, you have been purchased with a high price – you are loved, chosen, and blessed. And the sovereign God who pulled you out of darkness will surely see you through each season as well.

GOD CREATED US TO BE TOGETHER AND TO BE THERE FOR ONE ANOTHER. WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SHORTCOMINGS AND PRAY WITH EACH OTHER, THAT HONESTY, VULNERABILITY, AND ONENESS OF HEART OPENS DOORS FOR HEALING TO FLOW POWERFULLY!

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Personal Reflection: In the midst of difficulties, what is your default perspective? Is it easy for you to see the purpose, or do you usually look at the negative side? _____

Between you and God: Does your trust in God need revived in this season? Spend some time with Him to tell Him that you trust Him regardless of your feelings, emotions, or circumstances. _____

In the Word: What additional verses would you add to this list? _____



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