

09/26/04 – “HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE OFFENDED?”

To address the future we need to be properly related to the past...**to the recent past**...even yesterday!

In **Matthew 18:15**, we are told how to respond if someone sins against us, we are to go to them in private **to win them**

It's always about winning them, not mere correction, but getting the relationship right before the Lord & one another

Matthew 5:23-24, if you have ought against your neighbor don't bring your gift before the altar...God doesn't want **your gift**, if you carry offense

How do I know if I've been offended?

1. **The tape keeps playing** in our mind over & over of what that person or group did to us

Often it's someone in authority – Why is it that when we're the ones in authority we think of ourselves as benevolent & understanding?

Ephesians says not to let the sun go down on our anger – To speak the truth in love – Not to give the devil an opportunity

People can hold **offenses for decades** – Entire nations have been fighting & holding **offenses for generations**

2. **Your tongue keeps talking when you are offended**

He who repeats a matter separates intimate friends...talk to wrong person, not the person you should have, separate friends through your words

Life & death are in the power of the tongue – Bitter speech like an arrow – Can't talk about offense constructively or redemptively

3. **Criticism takes over**...A critical spirit...nothing is good enough...continually question a person's actions & motives

Proverbs 26 says, for lack of wood the fire goes out & where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down

Matthew 7:1-5 warns us not to go around looking for the speck in our brother's eye – Everyone of us has blind spots

4. **The avoidance game** - Will go to ridiculous lengths to avoid seeing someone, come up with excuses not to sit down & face the issue

“For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light.” Mark 4:22

After Adam & Eve sinned, the first thing they did was cover themselves, hide & make excuses

5. **Inability to forgive - Forgiveness is an activity of the will** - We can't wait for the “feeling of forgiveness” – Some feelings never come

Forgiveness costs because we bear the pain of the other's sin against us & willingly release them...set them free

Forgiveness is surrendering my right to hurt you back if you hurt me – **Only forgiveness can deal with injustice**

Don't have to trust someone to forgive them - Attitude towards person you forgive is not to be dependent upon their response to you (1John 1:9)

6. **Harboring thoughts of revenge – “Damaged Joy”**

Proverbs 24:17 – *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles...”*

Possible to be right in judgment but wrong in spirit

7. **Lingering sore spots**...Hypersensitive because of not properly dealing with past hurts & offenses – “Old wounds always seem new”

8. **Birds of a feather**

Attracted to other people who will support our positions - *“A lie goes half way around the world before truth gets its pants on.”*

Like Israel, **murmurers find each other & form a coalition**...it is hard to defend a lie...**slander & gossip destroys**

9. **Outbursts of anger**

“Hair-trigger” anger is all too often over-reactive & misplaced – “Take it out” on wrong person – Creates unnecessary pain

“...for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” James 1:20

10 **Withdrawal - He who separates himself quarrels against all sound wisdom...seeks his own desire**

Staying offended segregates – Being reconciled integrates - An offense may be based on false premises & misunderstanding

How do we overcome this?

1. **We have to turn to Jesus** - Jesus says to bless those that persecute you – To bless & curse not – To love our enemies (Luke 6:28-36)

2. **Resolve & determine to get it right before God & man wherever possible** (Matthew 5:23-24)

3. **Accept God's sovereignty** - He reveals our attitude through the struggle of being offended (Psalm 103:19)

4. **Resist self-pity when you're offended** - Don't fall into the trap...**What did I do to deserve this?** (Psalm 69:14)

5. **Seek wise counsel** - *“The first to plead his case seems just, until another comes and examines him.”* Pr. 18:17 A wise man seeks counsel Pr. 19:20

6. **Turn to God's Word – A lamp & light** - How does the Word of God instruct our thoughts, words & deeds? (Psalm 119:105-106)

7. **Surrender to God's will – “Not my will but Thy will”** - The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the fear of man is a snare (Proverbs 29:25)

8. **Keep a God-based perspective not a feeling-based perspective** - World is overly therapeutic – It is Jesus who sets us free! (Matthew 11:28-30)

9. **Choose to forgive** - Unlock the prison of resentment, anger, hatred, bitterness, revenge, etc. – **Great power in forgiveness** (Matthew 6:14 & 15)

10. **Verbalize that forgiveness** - Not just an internal decision - Speak the words of forgiveness to people wherever possible