

The Offended Mind

Some people wear their feelings on their sleeve. The smallest thing sets them off. Others have thicker skin — it takes more to move them, but certain topics or certain people can still find the crack. And then there are those who seem unmovable until the right person says the right thing in the right moment, and suddenly the armor is gone.

Offense finds everyone eventually.

What I want to talk about in this chapter is not the person causing the offense — though that is its own conversation. I want to talk about what happens to the person who receives it. What they do with it. What it does to them when they hold it. Because the offended mind is dangerous — not just to itself, but to everyone around it.



NOT ALL OFFENSE IS THE SAME

Before we go further, it is worth saying: not all offense is bad.

You have probably heard the phrase “the gospel is offensive.” That does not mean the gospel is harmful. It means the gospel reveals something wrong with the heart — and that revelation, as uncomfortable as it is, leads you toward Jesus. When offense shows you something true about yourself and moves you toward repentance and freedom, that is offense doing exactly what it is supposed to do. That kind of offense is a gift.

But there is another kind. The kind that does not lead anywhere good. The kind that settles in. The kind that does not produce change — only bitterness. The kind that comes from a misunderstood word, a careless comment, a moment that got out of proportion, a correction that stung, a truth that landed wrong. This is the offense I am talking about. The kind you pick up and carry. The kind the enemy uses to put blinders over your spiritual eyes.



THE VOICE THAT JUSTIFIES

Here is what makes the offended mind so dangerous: it almost always sounds reasonable.

The justifying voice does not announce itself as pride. It arrives dressed in legitimate grievance. It says: they said something that simply isn't true — how could they say that? It says: I would never do that to them. They betrayed me. It says: they lied — I can't believe they would do this. Or sometimes quieter: I can't believe they would say that to me. Even if it was something you needed to hear.

That last one is worth sitting with. Sometimes growth stings. Sometimes the thing that offends us is the very thing we needed to hear. A correction. A hard truth from someone

who loves us. A word that exposed something we were not ready to look at. And instead of receiving it, we reject it — and then reject the person who said it. We would rather protect our pride than receive the growth.

This is the trap. The offended mind does not evaluate whether the offense is legitimate. It evaluates whether the offense can be justified. And it almost always can be. Because the flesh is an excellent lawyer — it will build the strongest possible case for why you have every right to feel the way you feel. And once that case is built, the mind stops questioning it. The verdict is in. The door closes.

“Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.” — Ecclesiastes 7:21–22 NIV

That is a sobering verse. The same things we are offended by — the careless words, the hasty judgments, the moments we felt wronged — are often the very things we ourselves have done to others. The offended mind forgets that. It only remembers what was done to it.



WHAT THE OFFENDED MIND CANNOT SEE

This is one of the enemy's most effective strategies precisely because it does not feel like a spiritual attack. It feels like justice. It feels like self-respect. It feels like simply not allowing yourself to be treated a certain way.

But carrying an offense on the battlefield is like sitting down in the middle of a war because you feel you have every right to. Arrows are still flying. The battle is still moving. And you are sitting still, making your case to no one, while everything around you continues without you. It is self-destructive. And it is destructive to everyone who needed you to keep moving.

Offense, when it is not directing you toward change and reconciliation, does only one thing: it puts blinders over your eyes. And a believer walking with blinders on is not walking in the Spirit. They are walking in the flesh — guided by the wound rather than by God.

Think about what we have already established about the mind. A captured mind stops advancing. It stops being effective. It turns inward, replaying the offense, analyzing it again and again, the meaning shifting slightly each time until the original event barely resembles what actually happened. Thoughts that want to replay over and over. Thoughts that want you to re-examine every detail until the wound is deeper than when you started.

This is why Paul says to take every thought captive. Not just the obviously sinful ones. The replaying ones. The justifying ones. The ones that seem reasonable but are keeping you circling the same wound instead of moving forward.

An offended Christian is an unproductive Christian. Not because they stopped caring about God — but because their spiritual eyes are covered. They cannot see clearly what God is doing, what He is saying, or where He is leading — because the offense has filled their field of vision.

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” — James 1:19–20 ESV

The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. No matter how justified the anger feels. No matter how legitimate the grievance is. An offended, wrathful, bitter mind is not producing the fruit of the Spirit — it is producing the works of the flesh. And a mind producing the works of the flesh cannot exercise spiritual authority.



THE COST NOBODY COUNTS

I have seen offense destroy things that took years to build.

I have seen friendships broken for life over a misunderstanding that could have been resolved in a single honest conversation. Two people who genuinely loved each other, separated permanently because one said something the other couldn't let go of — or because neither of them could be the first to reach out, or one simply would have nothing to do with the other. Beautiful friendships, ended. Not because the relationship was broken beyond repair, but because the pride was too strong to bend.

I have seen families stop talking. Years of silence. Holidays without certain people at the table. Children growing up without knowing relatives who would have loved them. All because of an offense that, if either person had stepped back and looked at honestly, was not worth what it cost.

I have seen this in my own life. Offense has cost me things I wish I still had. Beautiful things, ruined — not because the situation was impossible, but because I could not forgive, or because I could not let go of my own pride. Those are usually the two things underneath every sustained offense. Pride and unforgiveness. One keeps you from admitting you were wrong or that the offense does not deserve the weight you have given it. The other keeps you from releasing what was done to you even when you know you should.

But here is the thing about offense that no one warns you about until it is too late.

The window closes.

I have seen someone carry an offense against another person for years. Holding it. Rehearsing it. Letting it quietly poison the way they thought about that person. And then the other person died. And by the time they realized how foolish the offense was — by the time they were ready to let it go, to reach out, to reconcile — there was no one left to reconcile with.

I do not even want to think about the weight of that regret. The words that never got said. The restoration that never happened. The relationship that ended not in peace but in unresolved bitterness, simply because the window closed before anyone walked through it.

Do not wait. Do not assume there is time. The offense you are carrying right now has a window. And that window will not stay open forever.

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THE WAY OUT

The way out of the offended mind is not complicated. It is just costly to the flesh.

It is forgiveness. Not the feeling — the decision. Forgiveness is not waking up one morning and feeling warmly toward the person who hurt you. Forgiveness is a choice made before the feeling arrives — and often made many times before the feeling follows. It is saying: I am releasing this. Not because they deserve it. Not because what they did was acceptable. But because I refuse to carry it anymore. Because I am not willing to let this wound be the thing that governs my life and blinds my eyes.

Pastor Chuck was a dear friend and mentor of mine, who I mentioned in an earlier chapter — he had a way of making things simple that I have never forgotten. He once shared an analogy about forgiveness that has stayed with me.

Most people think forgiveness happens once and it is settled. And for God, that is exactly how it works — He forgives completely and does not remember. But for us, something different often happens. Months later, the memory returns. The feeling rises again. And we wonder if we ever truly forgave at all.

He described a man who went out into his yard and drove a stake into the ground as a sign that he had forgiven someone who had wronged him. Months later, the memory came back. He went outside and drove another stake. Then another. Each time, the gap between stakes grew longer. The feelings came less often. The wound was slowly losing its grip.

Years later, the man walked into his yard and saw it covered in stakes. And instead of feeling shame at how many times he had needed to forgive the same person, he felt something else entirely. Each stake was a monument. A record of every time he had chosen forgiveness over bitterness. Every time the enemy tried to reopen the wound and he refused to let it stay open.

Forgiveness is not always a single moment. Sometimes it is a yard full of stakes.

I consider myself someone who does not take offense easily. But I know that the people closest to me can say exactly the right thing to find the crack in my armor. A correction. A recommendation. A small comment that somehow bypassed all my defenses. And in those moments, if I am honest, I would find a way to justify the offense. Every time. The flesh is very good at that.

But I have also learned what it costs to hold it. And what it feels like to let it go.

Letting go of offense is not weakness. It is one of the most spiritually powerful things a believer can do. Because it is a direct refusal to give the enemy the foothold he is trying to create. Every time you choose forgiveness over bitterness, you are taking back ground. Every time you release an offense before it takes root, you are keeping your eyes clear. You are keeping your mind renewed. You are staying in a position where God can use you.

Be able to take criticism — especially when it is true. Be grateful for the people willing to point you toward growth, even when the pointing stings. Be quick to forgive and quick to let go. Do not rehearse the offense. Do not build the case. Do not give the wound a permanent address in your mind.

Take every thought captive. The ones that want to replay. The ones that want to justify. The ones that are quietly building a wall between you and someone God has placed in your life.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” — Ephesians 4:31–32 NIV

Just as in Christ God forgave you. That is the standard. Not “forgive when they deserve it.” Not “forgive when they apologize.” Not “forgive when the wound stops hurting.” Forgive the way God forgave you — completely, before you deserved it, at great personal cost.

As a Christian who wants to keep their eyes open and walk the spiritual walk — determine now. Do not carry an offended mind. The race set before you is too important. The people around you need your eyes clear. The Kingdom needs you moving forward, not circling the same wound.

Let it go. Keep your eyes open. And run.