

2023



SMALL FOXES OF OFFENSE

SMALL FOXES SERIES

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Song of Songs 2:15 NIV - Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

This Small Foxes series should be causing you to have an introspective look to ensure there is nothing in you that will sabotage your future.

- Week 1 we dealt with the Small Foxes of Complaints, we learned we have to monitor our confession.
- Week 2, we addressed the Small Foxes of Fear and learned fear will cripple and paralyzes you, so we will flip it with faith
- Week 3, we faced the Small Fox of Lack of Faith and since faith is the way we please God, we must elevate our faith in God.

Today is decision day, we look at the Small Fox of Offense. Offense is an emotional choice, it is a decision that we consciously make.

WE SAY THINGS THAT MAKE SIN APPEAR LESS SEVERE THAN IT REALLY IS

- "WHITE LIE OR BEND THE TRUTH" = LIAR
- " ENTANGLEMENT" = ADULTERY
- "I'M NOT ASKING FOR PERMISSION I'LL ASK FOR FORGIVENESS" = DISORDER
- "BORROWING WITHOUT PERMISSION" = STEALING
- "CHILLIN LIKE A MUG" = SLUGGARD

WE HAVE COINED PHRASES THAT DOWNPLAY THE SERIOUSNESS OF CERTAIN SINS. ONE SUCH PHRASE IS " CHURCH HURT." BUT WHAT DO PEOPLE MEAN WHEN THEY SAY "CHURCH HURT"?

- **"CHURCH HURT" = OFFENSE**
- We have to learn to speak Biblical language
- You cannot get over or heal from what you don't deal with or properly address.

WHAT IS OFFENSE?

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINITION:

AN OFFENSE IS SOMETHING WHICH "OUTRAGES THE SENSES." THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED ARE SOMETIMES DESCRIBED AS "HURT, WOUNDED, UPSET, INSULTED, DISAPPOINTED, IRRITATED, ANGRY."

THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION:

THE WORD **OFFENSE**, "...ORIGINALLY REFERRED TO THE PART OF A TRAP TO WHICH BAIT WAS ATTACHED. HENCE, THE WORD DESCRIBES LAYING A TRAP IN SOMEONE'S WAY.

Offense is a spiritual and emotional trap that can have detrimental effects on an individual's life and relationships.

- Offense is a violation of self concern
- It impacts relationships, which are the equity of kingdom of God
- Because relationships matter to God and us, Satan wants to cause disconnection in our relationships
- You can tell God's plan for you life by the caliber of relationships He puts in your life
- Some relationships cost too much to allow disconnection

Offense is seen as a destructive force that needs to be recognized and overcome through forgiveness, humility, and seeking God's perspective.

- People are offended as a result of unexpressed or false expectations and disappointment in people

JOHN BEVERE, IN HIS BOOK "THE BAIT OF SATAN," DEFINES OFFENSE AS:

Offense is essentially a deep-seated feeling of resentment or hurt caused by a **perceived** or real wrongdoing or injustice.

- Perception is your reality even if it's not the reality
- It's not true just because it's true to you
- We do not hear what we heard, we hear what we think we saw
- Everyone sees and hears through their own experiences

WE MUST DETERMINE NOT TO BE OFFENDED, AND WE WILL SEEK TO KEEP OFFENSE OUT OF OUR LIVES.

*Acts 12:25 NIV - When **Barnabas** and **Saul** had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them **John, also called Mark**.*

WHEN WE READ BIBLICAL STORIES, WE OFTEN IDENTIFY WITH ONE CHARACTER OVER THE OTHER

- WE IDENTIFY AS THE OFFENDED - PAUL
- WE IDENTIFY AS THE NON-OFFENDED - BARNABAS
- WE IDENTIFY AS THE OFFENDER - JOHN, MARK

- No matter who we think we are in the situation, offense is everywhere
- Be careful not to become something you are not
- You have to be around people that are on the same mission as you
- It's important to your lenses focused when you read the bible
- Who you identify with will determine how you move in this lesson

THIS WILL BE YOUR RECORD BREAKING YEAR.

I) OFFENSE IS OUT THERE!

Acts 15:36-39 NIV - [36] Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." [37] Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, [38] but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. [39] They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,

- Be careful not to have grace for others, especially when your sins are greater
- Anytime we think we are more than we are we judge people and become hypocrites
- The church should be a place of another chance because we were all sinners, but for the grace of God (see Romans 3:23-24)
- You have to keep offense where it belongs, out there
- What's in you has to be greater than what's out there
- The Bible doesn't say why John, Mark disconnected, it was left out for a reason
- If God doesn't tell you, don't speculate, speculation can create offenses

What offenses are you holding on to? How has this offense shaped and affected your life?

Acts 15:39-41 NIV - [39] They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, [40] but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. [41] He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

- Offense will bring division, separation and discord
- You can continue the work but miss the connection God intended for you
- Two is powerful, but a threefold cord is not easily broken

Who or what have you abandoned because you allowed offense to rule?

II) OFFENSE IS OPTIONAL

Matthew 18:7 KJV - "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

- Jesus warned us about offense
- Offenses will come, but participation in offense is optional
- Be careful not to operate in the spirit of offense

What decisions have you made as a result of being offended? What was the result?

*Matthew 24:10-14 NKJV - [10] And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. [11] Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. [12] *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.* [13] *But he who endures to the end shall be saved.* [14] *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.**

- Offense opens the door to betrayal, betrayal opens the door to hate
- Offense is a gateway to deceptions
- When you are offended you hear things differently
- When you hear what you want to hear you are more open to deception

What lies have you fallen prey to instead of praying to God for guidance?

Matthew 7:15 NKJV - "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

- The false prophets are the people we least expect
- We can not let a false prophet deceive us from our promise
- There are more false prophets in the pews than in the pulpit
- They try to keep you from seeking help because they see offense on you
- We can become carnal we are in conflict
- There is not an offense big enough to get in the way of my blessing

Who have you allowed to get close enough to whisper in your ear?

WHEN WE MISHANDLE OFFENSE, WE OPEN OUR HEARTS TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES.

We often categorize ourselves as either the offended, the non-offended, or the offenders. However, we would be more accurate in categorizing ourselves as people who have the propensity to not be offended, to offend, or to be offended. **We are both benevolent and malevolent.**

- Nobody can make you do anything
- Until you deal with you, you will always blame others for what you have done

OFFENSE IS A CHOICE!(What are you choosing?)

- OFFENDER
 - Always needs to get someone together
- OFFENDED
 - Always has a sad story, always the victim
- UNOFFENDED
 - They aren't mad at anyone
 - They realize it all worked for their benefit
 - How they see you has nothing to do with you, but everything to do with them

III)OFFENSES CAN'T REMAIN OPEN

Proverbs 4:23 – Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it flows the issues of life.

Psalms 119:165 KJV -Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

- God gives us clear cut instructions on how to guard our heart against offense.
- God's word gives us peace and deliverance.
- Offense often leads to unforgiveness and bitterness.
- When I get offended, I check my feelings and choose to be unoffended
- To be unoffended, I have to deal with me
- Nothing shall offend me!!
- Being unoffended means I care, but I care not to take it personally

How can you forgive the way the word has instructed you? How will this help you become unoffendable?

*2 Timothy 4:9-11 NIV - [9] Do your best to come to me quickly, [10] for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. [11] Only Luke is with me. **Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.***

- Don't be petty when people reach out after the offense
- There is always a test to see if you'll stick with the decision to not be offended
- Learn to have closure on offenses

What offense have you not gotten closure for yet? What are you waiting on?

HOW TO GET OVER OFFENSE

If you are holding on to an offense, here are FIVE steps to take to lay it down.

1. RECOGNIZE THE HURT

"I'M FINE" WILL NOT HELP THE PROCESS.

Psalm 139:23 NIV - "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts."

2. PRAY AND PERHAPS EVEN FAST

Isaiah 58:6 NIV - "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"

3. SEARCH AND SPEAK THE SCRIPTURES

FOR EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO FORGAVE OTHERS.

- Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 50:19-21)
- Father of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31)
- Jesus on the Cross (Luke 23:34)

4. BLESS THE OFFENDER

Matthew 5:44 -But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
(Psalm 35:11-14)

5. FORGIVE AND PRAY FOR RECONCILIATION

Matthew 6:14 -"If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you" (Matthew 6:14-15) (Matthew 18:15-20)

QUESTION

Why is it important for you to choose to live unoffended?

DECLARATION

I CHOOSE TO BE UNOFFENDED! IT'S THE ONLY CHOICE THAT GOES WITH MY FUTURE.

PRAYER

Father God, forgive me for operating in the spirit of offense. I chose to allow the actions and

words of others to allow offense to enter into my heart. I understand that I am not perfect or without sin. Cleanse me God, fill me with your grace that I may extend it to others. As I interact with Your children, allow me the ability to do so with love and grace in Jesus' name, Amen!