

LOVE LESSONS
Love Tears Down Offenses
1 Corinthians 13:5-6

The Word of God reminds us of the truth that people offend people. James says that it is IMPOSSIBLE for OFFENSES NOT to happen between people. They are inevitable because we are FALLEN people. **Hurt people hurt people.** We are selfish and sinful, and our broken behavior can actually BUILD FENCES between us and the people we love! **Offences build fences.** This is true, but it does not have to be the FINAL WORD. Jesus changed everything by the sacrifice of his life for our forgiveness and healing, and we now have a completely NEW WAY to relate to one another in the love that HE has poured out on us! Now, we can learn to DEAL with offenses IN HIS LOVE, because his love has the ability to TEAR DOWN OFFENSES. In the TRIO of TRUTHS that we will look at today, we will examine the relationship between our hurts, our sins, and his truth. **1 Corinthians 13:5-6 NIV**
5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

I actually want to start looking at these ideas about love by starting from the center with love's attitude toward EVIL. Paul gives us a very important, very startling fact:

Love does not CELEBRATE SIN.

We live in a world that loves to celebrate sin. Pride and greed are portrayed as heroic virtues. Violence is glorified. The immoral, unrighteous behavior of people is PARADED before us daily in the movies, in media, in sordid conversations in locker rooms and bedrooms, and on computers and phones around the world. Sin sells! But sin also SICKENS and KILLS. Sadly, the attitude of the church members in Corinth toward sin was amazingly casual and compromising. This was one of the key issues that Paul had to address in several places in this letter. We may think that we are exempt from this kind of radical behavior, but I am not so sure! Sin is way more prevalent in my life than I want to admit. **One way to KNOW how compromised you are with sin is to see how much it SECRETLY DELIGHTS YOU! Do you still give CERTAIN SINS a PLACE in your heart? Do you keep the DOOR open to certain habits that you KNOW are wrong? This not only sets YOU up for FAILURE, it is a ROTTEN SPOT in your heart that WILL CERTAINLY cause MAYHEM in your relationships with others!**

***Refuse to celebrate sin in your own life.**

- Nurturing sinful ATTITUDES [Hatred, Envy, Greed, Lust]
- Justifying our "personal" sinful HABITS. [Pornography, Overeating, etc.]
- Outright immoral behavior [They were notorious for this in Corinth!]
- *Illicit SEX must not be equated with love. [Only creates a FOG of confusion]
- *Do you GLORIFY your sin rather than GRIEVE over it?

***Refuse to celebrate sin in those around you.**

- Don't participate in the sins of others. [Lying for them, enabling them, etc.]
- Celebrating the sins of others reinforces their rebellion against God.

***Refuse to celebrate the painful consequences of sin on those that you dislike!**

- Gossiping about an offender when he "gets what is coming to him!"
- Secretly longing for an offender to FALL.

Love celebrates with the TRUTH.

*Love refuses to LIVE in hidden ness. **Ephesians 4:24-26 NASB**

24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. 25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. 26 BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

*Love knows that healing is only possible when sickness (mine first) is revealed.

-This is why love "rejoices" in the truth. **2 Corinthians 7:9 NASB**

9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

-Learn to "speak the truth in LOVE!"

*Love knows that grace is only possible in a context of truth.

-The CROSS is the ULTIMATE PICTURE of GRACE and LOVE!

-This is DIRECTLY RELATED to how we handle offences.

Love does not reinforce OFFENSES.

Note: You can establish BOUNDARIES without building FENCES. Boundaries help to create healthy space in relationships, while fences simply seek to keep people AWAY. Boundaries are created without conflict; fences are created in conflict.

Keeps no record of wrongs = to make an account of; to calculate.

WE REINFORCE OFFENSES WHEN:

***We refuse to face our hurt honestly. Ephesians 4:29-31 NASB**

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

-What do I need to OWN? [Examine what is amiss in YOUR HEART.]

-What do I need to make ALLOWANCES for?

*In Ephesians, I believe Paul is setting us up for the truth that some things do need to be forgiven, but some things are unintentional offenses that do not require forgiveness, but simple Christian charity. **Ephesians 4:1-3 NLT**

1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, **making allowance for each other's faults** because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

*Simple Annoyances [Driving too slow, Smacking their food]

*Defeats [Getting a job I wanted, Winning a game]

*Slightings [Not waving at me in the store, Not sharing their good news]

The right way to deal with these kinds of hurts is to **grow in humility** and **exercise patience and understanding with others**. We must make allowance for the fact that we live in an imperfect world, and things will often not go our way. That is part of life. If we keep allowing these issues to be seen as attacks, then we create a constant environment of tension, and we set ourselves up for endless offenses! But what do we do if the behavior was TRULY an offense against us?

There are some hurts that do require an OUTWARD RESPONSE. Lewis Smedes described these as **1) Acts of Disloyalty**, and **2) Acts of Betrayal**.

-Andy Stanley's parenting ritual: **Did anyone hurt you? Did you hurt anyone?**

Many people have a very strange reaction to their own hurt and anger; they STUFF IT and DENY IT. Maybe they did not do this the first time it happened, but they realized that they were rejected or rebuked by the offender - and even by other friends/family - when they tried to express their hurt. Maybe they were shamed or made to feel guilty for expressing their hurt. Or maybe they simply chose to think that LOVE would never point out a loved one's sin to them! So, they chose to bury their anger and tried to minimize the offense. There is only ONE PROBLEM with that: it does not work. When we deny our hurt and try to ignore our anger, then IT WILL EXPRESS ITSELF in other ways. **[QUOTE from I Should Forgive, P. 14]** In other words: **A LIFE OF DENIAL IS A DENIAL OF LIFE!** When we ignore genuine offenses and the HURT they create, we set ourselves up for isolation; one offense at a time. We do this in several ways.

***We rehearse our hurt.** ["Takes no account" can also mean, "to meditate on."]

-Malice leads to bitterness. **(Look at Ephesians 4:31 in REVERSE)**

-This POISON destroys relationships slowly. **Hebrews 12:15 NASB**

***We fail to confront and forgive. Ephesians 4:32 NASB**

32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Our wrong responses must be forsaken, and these offenses must be forgiven! **If you forgive others, then you will be able to MAINTAIN a TENDER HEART toward them.** *If you do not forgive them, then the hurt gets attached to your spirit and bitterness begins to grow. This is where fences get bigger in our heart!* This is why Jesus told us in **Matthew 18:15 NLT** to GO to those who have offended us in order to make it right. You don't need to wait until they come crawling to you on their hands and knees begging for your forgiveness. *[They probably won't do that anyway!]* Go to them! In fact, in another place Jesus says that you should go to someone even if you were the one who offended them. **[Matthew 5:23-24] Who goes? You go!** But understand this, if you go it needs to be for something that is worthy of the effort and not just a case of you being hypersensitive in your reactions. If you do not know if this is the case, then you can seek counsel before you go by asking a godly friend or associate without giving away the name of your offender! I have done this on a number of occasions and it has helped me to grow in my ability to handle minor offenses properly without a big ordeal! Furthermore, this word "go" means to go directly and privately (without a lot of noise) in order to settle the offense. In other words, you are not to announce their offense to all of your friends [GOSSIP] in order to make sure that they all side with you and hate him as much as he deserves before you forgive him. The reality is that – when we do this – we encourage people to take up our offenses and form an ungodly alliance against another member of the family. This is called taking up a cause, and it is DEVASTATING to the potential healing of relationships! The proper way to go at first is to GO ALONE without a posse!

Next, Jesus says that you are to "point out his offense" against you. *This means "to expose; to call to account."* This is often what we do not do. **We are afraid to give someone a biblical rebuke. We think that is somehow UNLOVING!** So instead, we silently mark that offense in our record book; but we do not often have the courage to simply go to them and simply say: "THIS IS WHAT YOU DID, AND THIS IS HOW IT AFFECTED ME." Simple. Direct. In doing this, you are not judging their motives for why you think they did it. You are not accusing them of being wicked, evil people. You are in fact able to go to them in love and let them know how much you value their impact in your life by guarding it through HONEST confrontation. The GOAL is RECONCILIATION. It may not always happen, but that is always the aim of love. You keep YOUR heart clean and always ready for reconciliation!

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love never celebrates sin. Love always rejoices when the truth wins out! These love lessons were meant to remind you of YOUR PART in TEARING DOWN OFFENSES for the sake of the beloved. So, are you fenced in these days? Maybe it is time to start tearing down some offenses!

Let's pray.

