



TAKING THE BAIT
I'm offended
Shane Philip
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are starting a brand new series called **Taking the Bait**. There are many ways we can trap things, but in this study we're going to talk about the traps that Satan sets for us when we take the bait. In the next few weeks we're going to look at some of these traps: bitterness; discouragement, anxiety and uncertainty. We start with one of his most sneaky and potent traps -- offense.

SCRIPTURE¹

Luke 17:1 Jesus said to his disciples, "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come."

Proverbs 19:11 A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.

Colossians 4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Proverbs 16:24 Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Romans 4:25 Jesus was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justifications.

OBSERVATION

In Luke 17:1, Jesus uses the Greek word for "stumble", skandalon, which is defined as the bait or trigger of a trap. Here He tells us that these little stumbles, or offenses, are certain to happen to us and our response to them determines how far along in our journey with Him we are progressing. We all make mistakes and say things we wish we could take back and we therefore offend people from time to time. Thankfully, Jesus also talks about forgiving the person who offends us.

APPLICATION

Think of all the creative ways we use to trap things: 1) When an animal goes in to this trap it can't get out. It takes the bait, the door slams shut, and then it is trapped; 2) Then there's the mousetrap where cheese is the bait and, SNAP, it's done; 3) We also have ant traps where the ants take the bait back to the colony and the whole group of them is dead; 4) The bug zapper is next and insects are fried, and finally, 5) the fishing lure.

QUESTION: How many of these ways have you used to entrap something? How badly did you feel afterward?

In this series we are going to discuss how Satan sets the trap of offense for us when we take the bait he prepares. Let's think of all the ways we have been offended lately: 1) We looked at a post on social media; 2) We saw a political commentary on television; 3) We overheard a negative comment about ourselves and spoken behind our backs; 4) While driving, someone cut us off; 5) Someone in the grocery store was going the wrong way in an aisle or wasn't wearing a mask. These are so common, we are all guilty, right?

¹ All scripture translation is NIV unless otherwise indicated.

QUESTION: In which of these ways has Satan trapped you into reacting in anger? What is he doing today?

The issue isn't just being offended – but holding onto the offense is Satan's way of trapping us and keeping us from God's plan and purpose for our lives. So, let's look at resolving this problem of offense in two ways: **1) Don't hold on to it.** We can do this if we take a moment and remember that patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and our journey of discipleship includes surrendering our lives to His work. Not everyone **overlooks** an offense – only the wisest people do. They don't have a bunch of chips on their shoulders and walk around talking about how offended they are all of the time. The word "overlook" is so powerful! In Hebrew it is "abar" which means to pass over or step over.

QUESTION: What offenses are you holding onto today? How long have you been doing this? Why?

QUESTION: When have you offended someone? What did you do to repair that situation?

We can count on Satan preparing a huge trap for each of us in coming weeks, but when we are offended, we have a choice. We can choose to step into it and get trapped or we can choose to step over it and please God. This doesn't mean we avoid conflict at any cost. There is a difference between responding and reacting. Some of us are quiet and stew. Others of us take pride in speaking our minds. We choose to react and just tell that that other person off. But it takes more strength to step over an offense than it does to react or avoid it.

QUESTION: How do you automatically respond to an offense? What would it look like if you just stepped over those offenses?

This principle of stepping over is one of the secrets of a loving marriage because it is so easy to be offended by those we're closest to. This often happens early in marriages, but over time and experience, we can learn to not be easily offended – to give the benefit of the doubt and to assume the best of the other person. **2) Don't be guilty of purposely causing offense.** Jesus says woe to anyone who does this. Woe is bad! To avoid woe, we need to extend grace – just like the grace God extends to us every day. This means forgiving – being full of grace, seasoned with salt which makes every meal much more palatable, after all.

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you extended such grace to someone who has offended you.

QUESTION: When have you offended someone? What did you do to repair that situation?

Gracious words are sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. They bring us together. Jesus prayed for our unity, not uniformity which means everyone is the same. No, unity implies diversity. Jesus called twelve very diverse men to be His followers. Some grew up in small towns and some big towns; some were fishermen and others were tax collectors; some worked to overthrow the government of all things! There would have been plenty of heated conversations about politics and who was the most important. But the night before Jesus was getting ready to leave them, He prayed for unity so that the world would know the love of God.

QUESTION: How much unity do you have in your life, i.e., at work, in your home, at church, with friends, on committees? What could you do to bring unity to those relationships?

For some of us, the reason we haven't followed Jesus is because we have been offended by Christians. It has been a barrier for us that we couldn't step over. But, consider this: Just because someone follows Jesus poorly, does not mean that He is not worth following. **Avoiding an offense is impossible, but living offended is a choice.** Don't take the bait and don't be guilty of purposely causing offense. We don't always have to defend ourselves. We can let our lives and character be our greatest defense. We can live in such a way that, even though we are accused of doing wrong, others will see our lives and find Jesus there. People may not know our stories (unless we have been in a **Rooted** group together), so they have no frame of reference to understand how an offense could bother us. So, when we are offended we have a choice: Lash out and shut them out of our lives or let go extend grace.

QUESTION: How much time do you spend getting to know about the stories and experiences of those around you?

QUESTION: How has God extended grace to you this week? How can you look at your life and do anything else for others?

Our friends don't need an answer and our enemies won't believe us no matter what we say. So, let's save ourselves some grief, step over, and continue peacefully and graciously on our journey with Christ.



PRAYER

Heavenly Father, in our world, offenses are so hurtful and injurious to relationships and our emotional health that we want to lash out and correct the offender. In Your Kingdom, choosing to extend grace is the only option open to those who love You and want to be obedient. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: How many of these ways have you used to entrap something? How badly did you feel afterward?

QUESTION: In which of these ways has Satan trapped you into responding in anger? What is he doing today?

QUESTION: What offenses are you holding onto today? How long have you been doing this?

QUESTION: How do you automatically respond to an offense? What would it look like if you just stepped over those offenses?

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you extended such grace to someone who has offended you.

QUESTION: When have you offended someone? What did you do to repair that situation?

QUESTION: How much unity do you have in your life, i.e., at work, in your home, at church, with friends, on committees? What could you do to bring unity to these relationships?

QUESTION: How much time do you spend getting to know about the stories and experiences of those around you?

QUESTION: How has God extended grace to you this week? How can you look at your life and do anything less for others?