

Overcoming Offenses

Small Group Guide: Overcoming Offenses

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: Share a time when you were surprised by how deeply something affected you that you didn't expect would bother you.

Key Scripture References

- Luke 17:1-2
- Mark 6:1-5, 18-28
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
- Proverbs 19:11
- 2 Corinthians 2:10

Main Points from the Sermon

1. Jesus Gladly Went to the Cross

The sermon opened with a powerful reminder that Jesus bore our burdens on the cross before we were even born—and He did so gladly.

2. Three Truths About Offenses

- **Offense is a trap** (set by the enemy)
- **Offense prevents God's work** (Mark 6:1-5)
- **Offenses are contagious** (they spread to others)

3. The Goal: Thick-Skinned, Soft-Hearted

We should strive to be resilient against offenses while maintaining a tender, forgiving heart.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding Offenses

1. **The pastor mentioned that "offenses are impossible to avoid." How does knowing this change your perspective when someone hurts you?**
2. **What does it mean that offense is a "trap" set by the enemy? How does this shift blame away from people and toward spiritual warfare?**
3. **Read Mark 6:1-5. How did offense prevent Jesus from doing mighty works in His hometown? What might offense be preventing in your life or in our church?**

Section 2: The Contagious Nature of Offense

1. Discuss the story of Herodias, her daughter, and John the Baptist (Mark 6:18-28). How did carrying someone else's offense lead to tragedy?
2. Have you ever carried someone else's offense (a spouse's, child's, or friend's)? What was the result?
3. The pastor asked: "What if we were as diligent about avoiding offenses as we were about avoiding COVID?" What practical "precautions" could we take against offense?

Section 3: Rising Above Offense

1. Proverbs 19:11 says "it is to one's glory to overlook an offense." The pastor illustrated this by climbing a ladder. What does it mean to "rise above" an offense practically?
2. What's the difference between being "thick-skinned, soft-hearted" versus "thin-skinned, hard-hearted"? Which one describes you most right now?
3. How does forgiveness help us overcome offenses? Why is it often so difficult to forgive quickly?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Offenses will come—Jesus promised they would** (Luke 17:1)
- ✓ **The enemy sets traps; people provide the bait—don't take it**
- ✓ **Carrying offense prevents God's work in our lives and relationships**
- ✓ **Offenses are contagious—we must not pass them to others**
- ✓ **Forgiveness is the key to freedom from offense**
- ✓ **Jesus gladly bore our burdens before we existed—we can extend grace to others**

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Identify one offense you're currently holding onto. Answer these questions:

- Who set the trap?
- Who provided the bait?
- How is this offense preventing God's work in my life?
- Who might I be passing this offense to?

Then take action:

1. Pray for the person who offended you
2. Choose to forgive (even if you don't "feel" like it)
3. If appropriate, have a reconciling conversation
4. Ask God to help you "rise above" this offense

Additional Reflection Questions

- **What would your life look like if nothing offended you?**
- **How can we help each other "not stick our arms in the trap" when we see a brother or sister getting offended?**
- **The pastor said his wife should tell him to "rise above that offense" rather than carry it for him. How can we lovingly hold each other accountable in this way?**

Prayer Focus

Pray together for:

- Wisdom to recognize offense traps before falling into them
- Thick skin and soft hearts
- Freedom from any offenses currently held
- The courage to forgive quickly
- Protection from carrying others' offenses
- God's mighty works to flow unhindered in our lives and church

Closing Thought

"It is to one's glory to overlook an offense." —Proverbs 19:11

When we choose to rise above offense and forgive, we experience the freedom Christ died to give us. Let's be people who break the cycle of offense rather than spread it.

For Next Week

Come prepared to share one testimony of how you overcame an offense this week or helped someone else avoid the trap of offense.