

# Handling Offense Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, March 6, 2022

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

## SETTING THE STAGE

I want to open with a selection from Matthew 18...

**Matthew 18:20b (NIV, Christ Speaking)**

“... where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

**Matthew 18:20b (KJV, Christ Speaking)**

“... where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

**NOTE 1** – Based upon this enduring word, we affirm that Christ Jesus is present as we gather in His Holy Name. Consider the reality that the Lord is uniquely present in our midst this morning. What a tremendous source of peace, comfort and joy (i.e., independent of challenge, circumstance and event)!

**Q1. How many revel in the promise that He is uniquely present amongst those gathered in His Name?**

HOWEVER...

**Q2. Do you want to know what else is present whenever and wherever two or three are gathered?**

**A.** The potential for strife, disunity, discord, disharmony and the presence and operation of OFFENSE...

**NOTE 2** – He may be here with us, but WE are still here too (i.e., with our baggage, issues and tendencies to wound and/or be wounded by others). Unless you plan to live under a rock or as a recluse, you are going to have to navigate this element called OFFENSE. It is a stumbling block on the path of faith that has derailed many. As your pastor, I say it need not derail you.

**KEY 1** – Thus said, I want to offer a four-part series on the timeless and timely topic of OFFENSE.

**KEY 2** – This study will prepare you to overcome this obstacle in Christ (i.e., IF heeded)...

**James 1:22 (NIV)**

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

## THE “WHAT” OF OFFENSE?

Let us begin to establish a foundation for this series with the most foundational of Q’s...

### **Q. WHAT does it MEAN to be offended?**

**A.** It means that someone has managed to trigger, irritate or anger us in some way. It means we have been somehow slighted, wounded or negatively impacted through the words, actions or activities of another. Ultimately, this is something UNIVERSALLY experienced...

**FYI** – It seems that everyone has been offended (i.e., not once or twice, but many times). We have all known hurt feelings and felt the wounding effects of another’s actions. We have all experienced insult and the sting of mistreatment; and offense operates in the church as much as it does in the world! By show of hands...

**Q1. How many have experienced offense in the world (e.g., family, workplace, neighbor)?**

**Q2. How many have experienced offense in the church (i.e., the local community of faith)?**

MOVING ALONG...

## THE “HOW” OF OFFENSE

**Q1. HOW are we offended?**

**Q2. HOW is it that we come to be offended?**

**NOTE 1** – One author likens offense to a SEED that is planted by others...

- A)** It is planted by what others SAY to us (e.g., cutting or abrasive remarks; sarcasm, etc.)
- B)** It is planted by what others did NOT SAY to us (i.e., sometimes a lack of words is just as hurtful)
- C)** It is planted by what others DO to us (e.g., activities of others that bring about injury and/or harm)
- D)** It is planted by what others did NOT DO for us (i.e., sometimes inaction can be just as hurtful)

**NOTE 2** – These seeds, if permitted, can all-too-quickly take root and produce a crop of ungodly, toxic fruit. Offense can catalyze resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, hatred, etc. Such elements in turn impact our thoughts, words and deeds unto the offender, leading to even more disastrous ends!

**KEY** – Consider how CANCEROUS offense is on a multiplicity of fronts...

- A)** The offended drown in bitterness, resentment, hatred, etc. This is disastrous vertically AND horizontally.
- B)** The one who brought offense (i.e., knowingly or unknowingly) experiences alienation, loss of rel. and rep.
- C)** The surrounding body of peers, family and onlookers may experience horrific results as well (uninvolved)...

- They may get turned off by professing Christians who can’t seem to get along
- They may feel the need to take sides (i.e., experiencing loss of friendships; fracture)
- They may be drawn into sinful activities (e.g., gossip or vengeance against the offender)

## TRANSITIONS

Therefore, learning to properly handle offense is essential (i.e., individually and collectively). In the weeks to come we will address biblical techniques on HOW to overcome offense, that we might walk in victory and in the newness of life. However, we must first deal with an even deeper Q...

**Q1. WHY are we so easily offended? That is...**

**Q2. WHY are we so prone to being hurt by others?**

**KEY** – We can only learn to overcome offense as we understand WHY we are so easily offended. Let us take the remainder of our time to explore the underlying reason(s) for offense. Allow me to provide a slate of root causes...

### #1 – SELF-OBSESSION & PRIDE

Firstly, we are easily offended because the words or actions of others offend our human PRIDE...

**NOTE 1** – Since the fall of man in the Garden (cf. Gen. 3), we have been passionately, wholeheartedly and recklessly obsessed with ourselves! We possess a focus that is nearly always inward in nature, as we function as the center of our worlds. We are self-centered, self-obsessed and self-consumed...

**Q. Don't believe me? How often do you think about YOU?**

**ILL 1** – Oscar Wilde humorously noted, "Come over here and sit next to me. I am dying to tell you about myself!"

**ILL 2** – One cold winter's day a crowd of people stood in front of a pet shop window and watched a litter of puppies snuggling up to each other. One woman laughed and said, "What a delightful picture of brotherhood! Look at how those puppies are keeping each other warm!" A man next to her replied, "No, ma'am, they're not keeping each other warm--they're keeping themselves warm."

**NOTE 2** – Those who desire life "abundant" (cf. John 10:10) must deal with this sense of self-obsession. It is perhaps the most malignant element of our fallen spiritual nature and the root of all other sin. However, those who would be MOST miserable should heed the following advice from an article entitled "How To Be Miserable"...

Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Use "I" as often as possible. Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others. Listen greedily to what people say about you. Expect to be appreciated. Be suspicious. Be jealous and envious. Be sensitive to slights. Never forgive a criticism. Trust nobody but yourself. Insist on consideration and respect. Demand agreement with your own views on everything. Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favors shown them. Never forget a service you have rendered. Shirk your duties if you can. Do as little as possible for others.

**NOTE 3** – This "All-About-Me" mentality is fertile soil for being oft-and-easily offended. Hurt feelings and offense are almost always the result of being overly-occupied with SELF. For instance, we get offended when: **a)** no one likes our ideas; **b)** no one appreciates our contribution or talents; **c)** we get overlooked for a position or promotion; and **d)** people do not pay attention to us as we believe we deserve (e.g., "no one shook my hand at church" OR "no one even noticed my hair cut").

**Q. If I am the center of MY universe, how can I NOT be the center of YOUR universe?**

**A.** I can't be the center of your universe, for the position is likely already taken by you!

**FYI** – For those who think people are always thinking about you: they're not. In fact, you would be saddened to know how infrequently you appear in their minds at all. Ultimately, when SELF is dismissed, overlooked or mistreated (i.e., when PRIDE is wounded), you have the perfect climate for OFFENSE. Let go of pride and heed the wisdom of Scripture...

**Proverbs 29:23**

23 Pride brings a person low,  
but the lowly in spirit gain honor.

## **#2 – PERSONAL INSECURITIES**

Secondly, we are easily offended because of our personal INSECURITIES (i.e., outflow of point #1)...

**NOTE 1** – Let us consider the following account from the Book of Genesis...

**Genesis 3:6–7 (Emphasis Mine)**

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 **Then** the eyes of both of them were **opened**, and they **realized** they were **naked**; so they sewed fig leaves together and **made coverings for themselves**.

**NOTE 2** – Once Adam and Eve tasted of the forbidden fruit, their focus shifted from the Lord unto themselves. As such, they became tragically self-aware and insecure. Once they saw themselves apart from the Divine perspective, they felt both inadequacy and exposure (i.e., fueling self-compensation, v. 7).

**NOTE 3** – Thus, from our beginning, humanity has struggled with inadequacy and the need to measure up. We all struggle with self-acceptance and have an inborn need for acceptance (i.e., to “fit in”). We are, therefore, extremely conscientious of our shortcomings and failings, AND WHEN OTHERS KEY INTO THEM, we have the perfect climate for OFFENSE. Allow me to offer a few examples in the way of illustration. Note...

- 1) LOOKS** – Let's say you are insecure about your looks. How do you feel when someone says, “You look tired!”
- 2) WEIGHT** – Are insecure about your weight? How do you feel when someone “gifts” you a gym membership?
- 3) COOKING** – Insecure about your cooking? How do you feel when your mother-in-law offers you a cookbook!
- 4) MARRIAGE** – Maybe you're thirty and unmarried. How do you feel when asked: “What's taking you so long?”

**KEY** – Sometimes we can easily shake things off, and sometimes our personal insecurities trigger offense. Walls go up once our feelings are hurt and we fall prey to the voice of the enemy within our hearts and minds. Even if the offender meant no harm by their words, we become wounded and succumb to offense.

### #3 – ASSUMING THE WORST

Thirdly, we are easily offended because we all-too-often ASSUME the WORST in others...

**NOTE 1** – It is amazing how we always see ourselves in the most noble of lights while assuming the worst in others. Assumptions are dangerous things (i.e., you know what happens when you assume, right?). This fulness of this statement is not fit for public consumption, but it does contain a measure of truth.

**ILL** – Consider the PERIL of faulty assumptions...

The photographer for a national magazine was assigned to get photos of a great forest fire. Smoke at the scene hampered him and he asked his home office to hire a plane. Arrangements were made and he was told to go at once to a nearby airport, where the plane would be waiting. When he arrived at the airport, a plane was warming up near the runway. He jumped in with his equipment and yelled, "Let's go! Let's go!" The pilot swung the plane into the wind and they soon were in the air. "Fly over the north side of the fire," yelled the photographer, "and make three or four low level passes." "Why?" asked the pilot. "Because I'm going to take pictures," cried the photographer. "I'm a photographer and photographers take pictures!" After a pause the pilot said, "You mean you're NOT the instructor?"

**NOTE 2** – How often do we make faulty assumptions of one another based upon past experiences, gut feelings and intuition or personal insecurities? Based upon such things, we judge the intents and motives of another, and though we have no way of knowing for certain, we assume the worst in one another. This is a perfect climate for offense of the worst kind!

**ILL** – The following short-story that illustrates this vividly...

"I can't believe you let your kids eat toaster pastries! They're all sugar and trans fats!" a friend told me recently. She was over for coffee and couldn't help peering into my open pantry and seeing the box of toaster pastries. I could feel my anger starting to rise. My walls were going up. What would motivate someone to make a remark like that! It would never occur to me to critique what other people have in their kitchen cupboards. Maybe she thinks I am an unfit parent and that I do not take my parenting responsibilities seriously. Maybe she's one of those "know-it-all-moms" who looks down on other moms to make herself feel better.

**KEY** – Do you see how this woman is assuming the worst of the other? She has inferred that the other mom is judgmental, condescending, and on a witch-hunt to expose her as a poor excuse of a mother! After all, "What loving mother feeds her precious children toaster strudels and pop tarts!" These are some serious accusations based on insecurities, suspicion and raw emotion. Let us read how this story ends, however...

Still, I told myself my friend probably meant well. After all, she studied nutrition in college and that was 'her thing.' In her own way, she was probably trying to show concern. So, I simply smiled, shrugged and replied, "You're right. They're not exactly nutritious. But once in a while I buy them for a special treat."

**Q. Do you see how assuming the worst in others breeds disaster?** Don't assume the worst and consider...

#### Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

## #4 – MISCOMMUNICATION

Fourthly, we are easily offended because we are so given to interpersonal MISCOMMUNICATION...

**NOTE 1** – I have come to love the following quotes. The first is an old army proverb: “An order that can be misunderstood will be misunderstood.” Second, George Bernard Shaw (Irish Playwright) noted the following: “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

**Q1. Who has ever experienced miscommunication with a peer, spouse, neighbor, etc.?**

**Q2. How has ever experienced personal offense due to interpersonal miscommunication?**

**NOTE 2** – Miscommunication is the gap between what we think we said and what others think we said (i.e., and vice a versa). Communication is much more than the exchange of words, as it is flavored by body language, tone, emotional state, personal circumstance, and beyond. It is amazing we accurately communicate at all! And to tie my points together, we often fill in these gaps) with faulty assumptions!

**KEY 1** – Consider the following illustration...

### John 2:18–21

18 The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” 19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” 20 They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

**NOTE 3** – Consider the gap between what Jesus said and how His opponents interpreted His remarks. Jesus was referring to His imminent death and subsequent resurrection. They believed He was speaking of the Temple facility and precincts. This miscommunication, based upon the hardness of their hearts (i.e., pride) and faulty assumptions caused the Jewish leaders to take OFFENSE at Christ!

**KEY 2** – If people misunderstood Jesus, they will certainly misunderstand us from time-to-time.

**ILL** – Consider the following illustration from the contemporary world of the local church...

A person encounters the Pastor immediately after service as he is on his way into his office. “Pastor,” says the person, “Can I have a moment of your time?” At this, the Pastor states, “I really do not have the time right now. Would it be possible to set up another time to connect?”

**Q1. How might the person interpret the Pastor’s words?**

**Q2. Could there be a gap between what was said v. interpreted?**

**Q3. Can you not see how this miscommunication could cause offense?**

**KEY 3** – Be wary of the assumptions you make re: your communications. They can be the seedbed for offense!

SIMILARLY...

## #5 – MISUNDERSTANDING

Fifthly, we are easily offended because we are so given to general MISUNDERSTANDING...

**KEY 1** – We can all-too-easily experience offense due to interpersonal differences. We experience difference in a wide array of arenas. Allow me to note four areas (briefly) wherein we experience difference that might trigger offense...

### 1) Culture

Culture can be a source for misunderstanding and offense. I recall going to Ghana many years ago. In preparation for this mission's trip, several Ghanaians trained the team re: matters of cultural offense. We learned two key cultural customs that could offend our Ghanaian brethren: a) never aim your sole at a peer; b) when you shake hands, you must go from right to left. Thus said...

Please don't think culture only matters when you travel overseas. The United States is a melting pot of varying cultures! We can easily aggrieve our peers by being unaware of cultural differences (e.g., Misty and the West Coast sentiment in New England; sarcasm).

**Q. How many offenses have occurred between cultural misunderstandings?**

### 2) Age

The differences among age-groups and generations can cause offense. Every generation "believes they are smarter than their parents and wiser than their children." Let us say you are in church and an elder sees a teenager on a cellphone during service. You might believe the youth is being rude, irreverent and inattentive while they are simply making sermon notes on their phone or reading the Bible online!

**Q. How many offenses have occurred between generational misunderstandings?**

### 3) Gender

The gender-gap can certainly cause misunderstanding and offense.

**Q1. How man wives really "get" your husband (i.e., understanding how he thinks)?**

**Q2. How man husbands really "get" your wives (i.e., understanding how she thinks)?**

**FYI** – I can't tell you how many times I have offended Misty by not listening to, but trying to fix, her problems!

### 4) Personality Types

Varying personality types can be a source of misunderstanding and offense. How many of you are "wired" differently than your spouse, your parents, your children, a co-worker, a neighbor, and beyond? Have those personality differences ever caused misunderstanding that catalyzed offense? You are not alone.

**QUOTE** – "You will never be conformed to the image of Christ without someone to annoy you" (Lindell Cooley)

**KEY 2** – Despite the misunderstandings we experience due to culture, age, gender and/or personality types, let us cast aside a spirit of offense and obey the principles espoused by the apostle Paul nearly two-thousand years ago...

### **Colossians 3:13**

13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

### **Ephesians 4:1–6**

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

## **#6 – LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCE OR INJURY**

Lastly, we may become offended by the deliberate and/or purposeful wounds from another party...

**NOTE 1** – Many of the sources for personal offense are NON-intentional in nature. As we have noted, you can take offense by wounded pride, insecurities, faulty assumptions, miscommunications and misunderstandings with NO ill-intent of the offender. They may not even know they hurt your feelings!

HOWEVER...

**NOTE 2** – Sometimes people PURPOSEFULLY say or do mean, cruel and hurtful things. Consider the following...

### **2 Timothy 4:9–15**

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. 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

**KEY** – The apostle Paul was not imagining the harm of Alexander. It was purposeful and real. There are times, rare as they may be in the course of life and living, that some people will intend to irritate, anger, wound, scar or bring harm to you.

**Q1. What do you do when your heart is broken on purpose?**

**Q2. What do you do when the offender is content to keep offending?**

**Q3. What is the biblical and proper response against “purposeful” enemies?**

**FYI** – We will address answers to such queries in upcoming weeks! Please plan on being present.



## SUMMATIONS

### Q. WHY are we easily offended?

**A.** We have addressed the myriad topics of **a)** wounded pride; **b)** personal insecurities; **c)** faulty assumptions; **d)** interpersonal miscommunication; **e)** misunderstanding; and **f)** the purposeful and injurious activities of another...

**KEY** – Having addressed WHY we are offended, we are now ready to discuss HOW to overcome offense! Please tune in next Sunday as we continue in this new series. In the meantime, may the Lord bless you and yours!

### CONCLUSION PT. 1

**NOTE 1** – Those who wish to give online may do so at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org). Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

**NOTE 2** – Ministry schedule...

Prayer – Sunday at 8:45am  
 Sunday School – Sunday at 9:15am  
 CYC – Tuesday from 3–4pm and 4–5pm  
 Weekly Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm  
 Women’s Ministry – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 6:30pm  
 Men’s Breakfast – 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday at 9am  
 Potluck – Resuming in March 2022

### CONCLUSION PT. 2

**KEY 1** – As previously announced, we will be taking up a special offering today for the refugee crisis in Ukraine. Convoy of Hope—an Assemblies of God-related humanitarian and disaster relief organization—is already working to provide food, water, shelter and basic hygiene products to those most in need. Would you consider partnering with us in serving the people of Ukraine?

**1)** Those who would give by check can make checks payable to New Life Assembly of God (MEMO – Ukraine).

**2)** You may also give online through [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org) (MEMO – Ukraine).

**KEY 2** – ALL monies collected will be sent to Convoy of Hope and their relief efforts. Thank you in advance for your generosity and God bless you all!