

THE BIG IDEA: To overcome offense, we need to make offense offensive.The Take-Off

Have you ever been at the beach and been taken out by a wave only to get taken out by another wave as soon as you came up and were starting to get your breath?

Isn't that kind of how this stretch of teachings from Jesus feels? Like one wave after another and it's all we can do to hang on to the little rubber raft that you took out to body surf on.

Week 1 - money. Bam! What a wave, right? Then divorce in week 2 and we survive that one - actually are surprised at how much better that one was than we thought so we stand up confidently and Jesus knocks us a bit last week with the reality of eternity.

If you're staggering a little right now, I feel you! I get it. I'm the same way.

And what's the prize for getting halfway? The first 10 verses of Luke 17!

Depending on where you may be right now in your relationships, this one could feel like a tsunami and you could feel like someone trying to hold on to a tree in the middle of it.

My encouragement would be to hang on. Don't quit. Don't let go.

Let's read Luke 17:1-10.

I'm not going to spend a ton of time talking about what offense is, so let's see if we can simply get an understandable definition of what it is.

Your version may say "stumbling block" and that's a great picture. Offense is anything that COMES THROUGH A PERSON that trips us, traps us, or causes us to stumble.

It's always through a person, and that's why we get offended.

If a sidewalk cause me to stumble, I shrug that off.

If I trip over your feet walking on that sidewalk, it's not so easy.

I might get mad. Suddenly I think you tripped me on purpose. You've got the biggest clown feet ever! You're a person-tripping JERK!

That's how offense works, and Jesus says they happen all the time, and so we'd better figure out what to do with them.

It's true that offense will come, but it's more true that we can live free of offense by overcoming it.

To overcome offense, we need to make offense offensive, and it takes 3 things to do that.

1. Courage to confront

- a. Can we please not miss the obvious? Jesus talked about offense. He addressed stumbling blocks.
- b. If we're going to overcome offense - if we're going to make offense offensive - then we're going to have to address the things that cause it.
- c. We can't pretend it's not there or hide until it blows over.
- d. We must have the courage to confront it.
- e. The reason most people stay offended is because most people stay silent about the offense
- f. Worse, they only talk to themselves about it (and then they're always right in the offense!)
- g. Some of you love this because you have the personality of a bulldozer, so let's dig just a bit deeper before you go blowing up every relationship you have!
- h. Jesus told His disciples to "watch themselves" before they did anything else.
- i. Check your heart before you confront, because the rebuke isn't what you think it is.
- j. The Greek word for "rebuke" has the meaning of "to give honor to" and "to raise the value of"
- k. That's not what most of us think about rebuking, but think of it in terms of telling a believer that what they're doing is far below who they are in Christ
- l. The point of the rebuke is to realign them with their true identity - no matter how many times it takes
- m. How did the disciples respond? "Wait, what??"

2. Faith to forgive

- a. They asked for more faith, and while that sounds good, Jesus responded with basically, "You've got all the faith you need, so use it even if you don't feel it!"
- b. Lots of time we deflect from the real issue, and they did here.

- c. They thought they needed MORE FAITH to obey the command, but Jesus said it would only take a LITTLE FAITH if they would simply obey.
- d. Aren't we like that? We recognize the impossibility and immediately start asking for more from Him, but He's asking us the same thing He asked Moses: What's in your hand?
- e. Enough faith in who God is to obey and forgive, even if it's hard.
- f. And it will be - **Proverbs 18:19** says that winning back an offended friend is nearly impossible.
- g. But the word "nearly" opens the door for the faith we have to operate, even if it seems like a little.
- h. Forgiveness is a choice based on faith, not based on a feeling.

3. Humility to honor

- a. Jesus is practical, and that's something that we tend to either love or hate, right?
- b. He doesn't just talk about overcoming offense theoretically - He actually finishes by explaining one sure-fire way that we can know if we've overcome offense.
- c. Can we serve the ones who offend us?
- d. If verses 7-9 were real life, most of us would quit that job because the boss is a jerk.
- e. He or she actually has the nerve to demand and expect more from us instead of thanking us
- f. But Jesus says that our service to Him is simply the normal Christian life
- g. How do we know that we've dealt with offense? How about when you pick up and towel and serve people IN THE CHURCH who have offended you?
- h. "Oh, God! Increase our faith!!!"
- i. We read Proverbs 18:19 and think it's hard to win back offended friends because of the friend, but Jesus says here that it's hard because of us!
- j. People who have overcome offense have the humility to honor even those who may have mistreated or misunderstood them, and there is no freedom like that kind of freedom.

The Landing

So, where do we start? How about with the obvious - "watch yourselves"

Before we even begin to think about realigning others with their identity in Christ, let's allow the Holy Spirit to rebuke us - to realign us with OUR identity.

As He does that, we'll find our spirits becoming more and more sensitive to the trap of offense - or, in the words of The Big idea, we'll find offense offensive and do all we can to keep it as far away as we can.

Then, we'll find ourselves humbly honoring those who have offended us, and that is the love that wins over the hearts of people!

Let's pray.