

5 WEEKS

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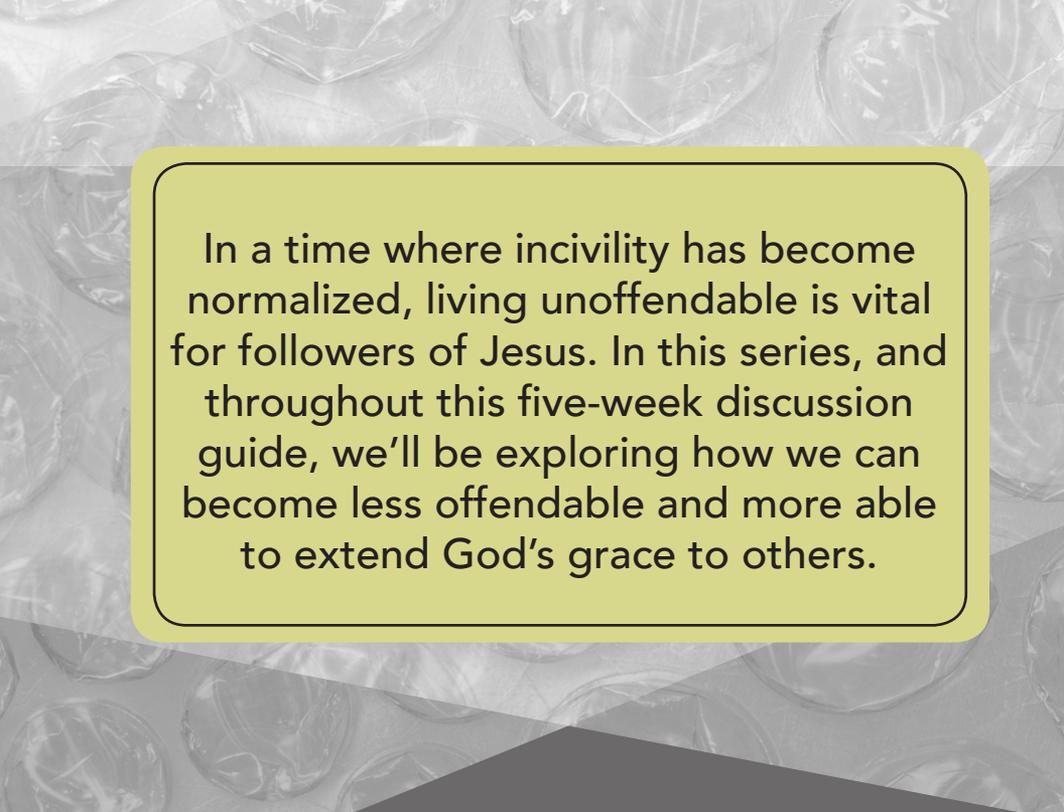
NO OFFENSE

ACTUAL

WAKE UP

ON

#900



In a time where incivility has become normalized, living unoffendable is vital for followers of Jesus. In this series, and throughout this five-week discussion guide, we'll be exploring how we can become less offendable and more able to extend God's grace to others.

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STOP BEING OFFENDED

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share how you've seen, heard or read of someone lately being offended, and then doing something offensive as a result. (i.e. – Will Smith's Oscar slap, a "Karen" in the checkout line, a verbal rant on social media).

Big Idea:

Being offended is inevitable. Living offended is a choice.

Key Scriptures:

2 Timothy 3:2-4

"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Romans 12:21

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Matthew 22:37-39

"Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

James 1:19-20

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

Discussion:

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:2-4. How/where do you observe these behaviors being demonstrated today?
2. How do you tend to react when you see these

behaviors being carried out?

3. Read Romans 12:21 and Matthew 22:37-39. How does living out these passages-act as an antithesis to the behaviors cited in 2 Timothy 3?
4. What day-to-day things tend to get under your skin? How do you tend to act as a result?
5. Read James 1:19-20. Which do you struggle with the most: being quick to listen, slow to speak, or slow to become angry?
6. How might that be contributing to you being offended or annoyed?
7. Do you want to make a point or do you want to make a difference? This question was posed in the message. Share about a time when you chose to make a difference instead of making a point and how that might have contributed to you living out your love for God and others.
8. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 Two suggestions for becoming less offendable are to lower your expectations of others and raise your gratitude for God's grace. How might these passages help you to do that?

Wrapping It Up:

Share with your group one step you'll take this week to be less offendable. Challenge yourself to return any evil done to you with a measure of grace and love.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the Street Medicine ministry as they serve the homeless in our community this week.

Memory Verse:

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."
James 1:19-20

DEALING WITH “THOSE” PEOPLE

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Who are the people that tend to offend you the most? A certain group? Friends? Family? Spouse?

Big Idea:

People don't change by being judged. People change by being loved.

Key Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:31-32

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Ephesians 4:29

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Ephesians 4:26

“In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

2 Corinthians 10:5

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Psalms 139:23-24

“Search me God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Discussion:

1. Discuss today's Big Idea. How have you seen that notion to be true?
2. Share with the group how you typically respond when you get angry or offended by someone:
 - Lash out
 - Stuff it
 - Harbor resentment

internally

- Let it go
 - Other
3. How could you respond with love?
 4. Read Ephesians 4:31-32. How might this passage encourage you in your response to offenses from “those people”?
 5. Read Ephesians 4:29. What are some ways you can protect your mind, heart, and mouth from unwholesome talk? How can you begin building others up with your words instead?
 6. Read Ephesians 4:26. The day of your hurt should also be the day of your healing. Discuss some ways you can begin healing on the same day of your offense.
 7. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. How can “taking every thought captive” help you in your journey to be unoffendable?
 8. Read Psalm 139:23. How might you utilize this prayer daily to reveal offenses you may be carrying?

Wrapping It Up:

Share confidentially one offense or judgement that you’ve been carrying. Pray together that you can each let go of that offense

and not take it back up again.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our Care Ministry volunteers as they visit hospitals and homes of people in our community who are suffering with health issues.

Memory Verse:

***“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
Ephesians 4:31-32***

YOU'RE NOT AS RIGHT AS YOU THINK

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

When was the last time you admitted you were wrong?

Big Idea:

Jesus doesn't call us to be right; He calls us to be loving.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 18:9-14

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on

me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

John 13:34-35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Discussion:

1. Do you have a difficult time admitting being wrong? If so, why do you think that is?
2. Read Luke 18:9-14. Which of the two men in the story – the Pharisee or the tax collector – do you feel was rightly accepted by God? Why?
3. Although the Pharisee was obedient to God's commands, his attitude pretty much cancelled out his ability to be a godly witness to others. In the same way, just because we're right, it doesn't mean that we're making a difference. Discuss how that might play out in your life.
4. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Where are you acting without love? Where are you acting with love?
5. Share about a time when you were met with love instead of judgment. How did that impact you?
6. How did that impact your relationship with the one who showed love to you?
7. Read John 13:34-35. Discuss how Jesus has loved you and how He might desire for you to tangibly love others.

Wrapping It Up:

Pay close attention this week to the areas in which you are prideful about "being right." Ask God to humble you and help you to act in loving ways.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the hundreds of elementary aged kids that will be attending Skill School this week and for the message of the Gospel to penetrate their hearts.

Memory Verse:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

WHEN BITTERNESS TAKES OVER

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Discuss what you hate most about weeds in your yard or garden.

Big Idea:

Bitterness is a hidden destroyer.

Key Scriptures:

Hebrews 12:14-15

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

Matthew 18:32-35

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay

back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Ephesians 5:11

"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."

Luke 6:27-28

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Ephesians 4:31-32

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Discussion:

1. Read Hebrews 12:14-15. Why do you think Scripture compares bitterness to a root?
2. Read Matthew 18:32-25.

What role do you think bitterness played in this servant's refusal to forgive his fellow servant, despite the fact he'd been shown such mercy?

3. Read Ephesians 5:11. According to this passage, what is a good practice in order to prevent the harboring of bitterness? Describe how you might expose a bitter root.
4. All bitterness starts out as a hurt. The next time you feel angry or resentful, what can you do to prevent a seed of bitterness from being planted in your heart?
5. Read Luke 6:27-28. Hatred and holiness cannot coexist in the same heart. How could your bitterness be harming those around you?
6. What can you do to let go of that bitterness and extend forgiveness instead?
7. Read Ephesians 4:31-32. What remedy does this passage give for getting rid of bitterness? Share a time when you were able to practice kindness, compassion and forgiveness in the midst of a great hurt.

Wrapping It Up:

If you've become aware of a root of bitterness that might

be taking root in your heart, share it with the group and pray together for the strength to forgive.

Prayer Focus:

Give thanks for the hundreds of kids who came to Skill School this week and pray for those who committed their lives to Christ for the first time.

Memory Verse:

**"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
Ephesians 4:31-32**

WHEN FORGIVENESS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE

WEEK 5

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Have you ever been rescued from danger? If so, share about it.

Big Idea:

Forgiveness is the key that rescues you from the prison of offense.

Key Scriptures:

Colossians 1:13-14

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Matthew 18:23-35

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

At this the servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back." But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay

back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Colossians 3:13

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

Discussion:

1. Read Colossians 1:13-14.
This passage demonstrates that when God rescued you through His Son Jesus Christ, you were not only saved from something, you are saved to something- specifically the Kingdom of God. What is the emphasized gift we have received from Jesus?
2. Read Matthew 18:23-35.
Here Jesus describes what the Kingdom of God is like. What do you learn about the place of forgiveness in this Kingdom that you've been saved to?
3. Read Colossians 3:13. What has been the most difficult offense you've ever had to forgive? If you were successful in that forgiveness, share what impact it had on you.
4. What are some barriers to

forgiveness – those reasons you might claim in order not to forgive someone? How do those hold up in comparison to the forgiveness you've received from God?

5. Have you ever seen pride kill forgiveness? What did you learn through that experience?
6. Power and peace are unleashed through forgiveness. Talk about a circumstance or relationship that could use the power of forgiveness. How do you think forgiving will impact other areas of your life?

Wrapping It Up:

If you are harboring any unforgiveness in your heart, commit to forgive your brother or sister from your heart with Jesus' help.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the volunteer counselors in our Revive Ministry as they meet with those who are struggling with the hurts and brokenness of life.

Memory Verse:

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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5601 Sunnybrook Drive
Sioux City, Iowa 51106
www.sunnybrookchurch.org