

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. TAKE TIME BEFORE GROUP TO GO OVER THIS GUIDE.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

If there were a phrase to describe the current atmosphere of our culture, it would be "easily offended." It seems something or someone offends everyone on a regular basis, and if you're a frequent user of social media, then you've seen the endless rants from offended users. If ever there was a time to learn how to deal with offense, it's now, and it all starts with one of Taylor Swift's most popular songs: "Shake It Off."

1. **A storm, a fire and a snake:** The apostle Paul survived a storm and a shipwreck, and just when he thought everything was looking up, a snake bit him. Sometimes, that's exactly how the offenses come, isn't it? Out of nowhere, we find ourselves under attack by haters who just want to "hate, hate, hate."
2. **How do you handle attacks?** They shouldn't surprise us. Jesus told us in Luke 17:1 that it was impossible for offenses NOT to come! All of us, at one time or another, are going to feel the sting of offense. The question isn't will we have them, but how will we handle them? Like Taylor Swift, Paul decided he was just going to "shake it off."
3. **The Gospel According to Jesus:** While the Gospel according to Taylor Swift tells us to shake off offense and then distance ourselves from the offender, Jesus took on our offense, paid for it on the cross and then drew near to us so he could transform us from haters to friends. As a result, we're now able to shake off offense, which is the best defense against offense. When others see how we handle offense, instead of shaking it off, our ministry to others will take off!

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- Do you have a takeaway from this week's message that you would like to share?
- Why do you think people are so easily offended? How would you describe the difference between feeling offended and taking up the offense?
- Read Proverbs 19:11 and discuss how wisdom and patience play such a big role in overlooking offenses. What does Proverbs 18:19 reveal about the opposite scenario if we don't overlook offenses?
- Put yourself in the shoes of Jesus: you've been sent by your Father to save sinners, but those sinners reject you and kill you. How likely would you be to give your life for someone who treated you that way? (Come on, be honest!!) Now read Ephesians 4:32. What role does forgiveness play in shaking off offense?
- When we are bitten by offense, our response determines our future. Proverbs 17:9 reveals 2 options: promoting closeness (love) or driving a wedge (separation). Which of these did Jesus do for us on the cross? How can you model that in the way you handle offenses?