

THE BIG IDEA: God wants us free from offense so that we can free the offender.The Take-Off

I don't have any scientific data to back this statement up, but we are one offended country, aren't we?

That statement isn't really all that surprising, because Jesus told us in **Luke 17:1** that it was impossible for things that offend us to not come.

So it would be silly to try and answer the question "Why am I offended?" because the answer would be that offenses are normal.

The question I want to answer this morning is, "How can I overcome offense?"

That's far more relevant because an offended church will never be able to help an offended culture.

So, we're going to spend the morning in Acts 16 and we're going to find 3 strategies for overcoming offense.

1. Recognize the season

- a. First things first, I need you to see that Paul is offended
- b. Lots of times we think "holy" people don't struggle with offense, but everyone does
- c. Look at **Acts 16:18** / "finally Paul became so troubled"
- d. The word for "troubled" means "to be troubled, displeased, offended, pained; to be worked up"
- e. Some translations say that Paul was greatly annoyed!
- f. I don't know about you, but I can relate to that!
- g. Now that we know he was offended, let's talk about the first of 3 strategies for overcoming offense.
- h. **Recognize the season**
- i. There are certain seasons when we are more vulnerable to offense. Let me give you a few:
 - After a big victory / 1 Kings 19 / Elijah thinks he's the only one
 - When we're tired / also 1 Kings 19 / had a showdown, just ran about 100 miles, fell asleep
 - During a big task / Jonah 4 / Mad he doesn't have shade, mad the Nineties repented
- j. Let's see if we can recognize the season in Paul's life here in Acts 16
 - Just added Timothy to the ministry team
 - Seeking and receiving direction from God
 - Was in new territory (spec., the heart of Macedonia)
 - Expanding the kingdom into Philippi
- k. Sometimes the very offense is what should cause us to investigate WHY we're feeling annoyed
- l. Recognizing the season we're in is a huge first step to understanding that

2. Realize the source

- a. I think the reason most people don't overcome offense is because they never move past the first step
- b. They assume that the offense is only horizontal and never **realize the true source** of it
- c. Let me show you this with Paul in our scripture
- d. We already know the season he's in and that he's ripe for offense
- e. So when he got agitated, he investigated and realized who the real enemy was
 - **Ephesians 6:12** / we don't fight against flesh and blood, but against powers and spiritual forces
 - **Matthew 24:10** / offense is the enemy's tactic, not the Father's
 - Offense is the first step toward the enemy's goal of destruction and distraction
- f. Who did Paul deal with when he was offended? **Acts 16:18** - the spirit, not the girl
- g. Need another example? Matthew 16:23 - Jesus heard Satan in Peter's words
- h. When you and I are offended, we need to get a revelation that it's not only horizontal, but vertical
- i. When we do, we'll be ready for the third strategy for overcoming offense

3. Release the Spirit

- a. Before I tell you the last strategy, let's see what happened next in Paul's day
- b. After recognizing the season and realizing the source (and dealing with it), he got beaten and thrown in jail
- c. If it had been you or me, what would we have been doing at midnight in that jail cell?
- d. More than likely, complaining. Staying agitated. Staying offended. Blaming others. Or God.
- e. What we do in the worst circumstances reveals whether or not we're overcoming offense.

- f. Why is it so important to be free from offense? Because God wants us to free the offender!
- g. That happens in the last strategy. We've got to **release the Spirit** to move in the offensive situation.
- h. Paul and Silas praised, their praise released the Spirit into the circumstance, and EVERYONE was set free
- i. Not only that, but they showed compassion to the jailer who fastened their feet in the stocks
- j. If Paul had not dealt with the offense he felt when that girl was agitating him, he wouldn't have been free in the jail cell to release the Spirit to set his offenders free. Do you see that?
- k. **God wants us free from offense so that we can free the offender.**

The Landing

So, here's how we're going to land this one.

I've got a playlist ready to go - songs that you may or may not know - but songs that I've been singing over our church this entire week.

Why? Because like Paul, we're in a season of taking new ground. We're in the heart of the city like he was in the heart of Macedonia. We're seeing lives radically changed in Albemarle like he was seeing in Philippi.

That means we're in a season when we're ripe to be offended.

But we know who the real enemy is, and we're going to release the Spirit into our season and HE is going to help us walk free from offense.

More than likely, it'll mean walking to the offended and seeing them set free, too.