

THE BIG IDEA: Offenses turn fences into prison walls.

The Take-Off

When you were little and someone asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up, I bet you didn't say, "A prisoner."

And yet, the filter that we're going to learn about today has made a lot of us exactly that.

This might be a good time for us to pray our filter prayer from **Psalm 139:23-24 (MSG)** together.

We're going to spend the morning in Luke 17:1-6, and as you find it, let me quickly remind all of us why filters matter:

- First, they change how we see what we see. We interpret everything through our filters.
- Second, while we all have them, our own filters are often invisible to us and the filters on others are often obvious to us. Grace is required.
- Third, if filters aren't dealt with, there's a danger of our perception becoming permanent

Each week when we come to the Word of God, we need to come ready to allow His truth to walk us through a 3-step process for dealing with negative filters.

We need to recognize, remove, and replace.

Last week we recognized the filter of pride, asked God to remove it, and made the decision to replace it with the filter of humility.

Today, we're going to tackle the filter of offense and replace it with the filter of forgiveness.

If we allow the Holy Spirit to do His job, this teaching will keep all of us out of jail, because **offenses turn fences into prison walls.**

I feel like that's a really good goal, don't you? :)

I'm sure by now you've found **Luke 17:1-6 (NIV)**, so let me read it and then we're just going to take it verse by verse.

As we squeeze every thing we can out of these verses, I know the Holy Spirit will do what we've asked Him to do: help us to recognize the filter of offense, remove the filter of offense, and replace it with the filter of forgiveness.

We don't do this often - maybe we should - but let's stand this morning and honor God's word as I read it.

1. Verse 1

- It's important to remember who Jesus is telling this to - His disciples
- If you're not following Jesus, you can learn from it, but it's gonna be hard to do it without the Spirit
- Verses 1 and 2 warn us not to cause offense**
- "Things that cause people to sin"
 - Translated as "stumbling blocks" in other versions
 - Greek word means "a trap"
- Jesus says these traps - these offenses - are "bound to come" - in other words, they're inevitable
- They come through people
- Woe to that person through whom they come
 - Not an eternal woe like go to hell and you have no shot of redemption
 - Greek word means a deep sense of grief and sorrow
 - When we see this word used in the New Testament, it should cause us to stop (Woe/Whoa) because what is being said is extremely important
 - Don't allow the filter of pride to keep you from thinking you couldn't cause an offense

2. Verse 2

- This verse paints a pretty graphic picture of offense
- A millstone around the neck isn't about jewelry - it was literally a stone used for grinding grain and was so heavy it had to be turned by a donkey
- Jesus isn't describing a guaranteed outcome, as if causing someone offense destines us for destruction
- What He is saying is that we need to treat offense seriously - it'd be better to have this happen than to leave offense unresolved because unresolved offense causes people to stumble
- Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV)** makes so much more sense in light of this verse
 - First, the altar points us toward reconciliation
 - God's presence will ALWAYS bring up offenses so they can be dealt with

- Leave your gift and seek forgiveness
- f. When we cause offense, we seek forgiveness

3. Verse 3

- Let's call this the "hinge" verse because Jesus is going to pivot from what to do when we cause offense to what we should do when we take offense.
- First, he puts a warning right in the middle of the two: "Watch yourselves."
 - It means to be on guard, in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately
 - Driving through Guatemala at night after the boy jumped out of the woods and freaked us out!
 - That's how we need to be in watching for potential offenses from or against us
- Now, Jesus warns us not to take offense
- If someone sins, rebuke him - talk to him directly and not about him indirectly

4. Verse 4

- This is a not-so-subtle reminder from Jesus that forgiveness is never a one-time act
- It is a daily, hourly, often minute-by-minute decision to leave the offender in the hands of God
- Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) / God didn't just forgive us once
- Jesus is encouraging us to develop the habit of forgiveness as much as the act of forgiveness
- Remember, when we take offense, we offer forgiveness

5. Verse 5

- If you've ever had to forgive someone for the same thing more than a couple of times, then you can identify with the response of the disciples: "Increase our faith!"
- We may have expected them to ask for more love, but they needed more faith to believe that forgiveness would be worth the price that they'd have to pay in order to forgive
- Forgiveness always involves pain (Jesus would say Amen from the cross!), and usually the ones who have offended us the most are the ones we love the most (that's why it hurts so deeply)
- Love motivates us to forgive, but faith activates the forgiveness

6. Verse 6

- "Mustard seed" - Jesus responds to the request for more faith by telling them they don't need a lot of faith to forgive, but they do need a living faith
- Mark 4:30-32 (NIV) / Faith can start small as long as it's alive because that means it can grow
- James 2:17 (NIV) / How does our faith grow? By being used.
- You may not have a lot of faith that forgiveness will eliminate the offense you're imprisoned by, but I would encourage you to put the little faith that you do have into action.
- Make the phone call. Meet for coffee. Write the letter. But take an intentional step in the direction of forgiveness sooner rather than later.

The Landing

Let's end this morning with the bombshell from Jesus in Luke 7:47 - Jesus reveals that how we love reveals how we've been forgiven

Close your eyes and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a revelation of how much you've been forgiven

Now, let that be the filter that you live with and love will tear down the fences that offense has built

Let's pray.