Resolving Offences

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CONNELL MINISTRIES 2012 Sermons

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Summary: *Offences will come. They are part of life. There's no way of escaping it. It's impossible that you're going to miss out on your opportunity to face some very offensive behaviour or some offending things, or some things happening that upset you. The first thing is to focus on yourself and your personal response. Jesus said take heed to yourself. Carefully guard your condition of heart. It's a choice.*



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I want us to open our Bible in Luke, Chapter 17 and I want to just share about - I felt the Lord put something on my heart that is a very, very important message because everyone thinks someone else ought to hear this one, so for all of those who think someone else should hear this one this is for you. So the title of the message, I could put it a couple of titles. I wrestled with a title. I've called it Resolving Offences but you could easily write down What, Me Offended? Never! [Laughter] So let's have a look in Luke, Chapter 17 and we see something that Jesus spoke. He said now look, He said to His disciples - that's His followers, so Jesus is speaking to His followers and He said it's impossible that no offences should come. How about that, so there is something that is definitely

impossible and here's what's impossible, that you should get through your happy life without someone doing something that upsets you. Isn't that true? It's impossible that you don't have experiences where people upset you, disappoint you, let you down, do something you never expected. Offences will come. They are part of life. They're a part of the life we live. There's no way of escaping it. It's impossible that you're going to miss out on your opportunity to face some very offensive behaviour or some offending things, or some things happening that upset you.

It could have been someone just got in and got your car park and now you're upset, couldn't even enjoy worship. That seat you were thinking you were going to sit in, someone sat in your seat and so there you are, upset, can't even enjoy worship. It's like God isn't there. Of course God's there. The only thing that is is your heart's not right, that's why you can't enjoy Him. You know the big thing is we don't have to struggle to go somewhere. We just have to become conscious of where God is. He's in us and with us, so offences must come. Jesus made it very, very clear, so wherever there are people you're going to find offences, wherever. Now we seem to somehow think if we come into the church there won't be offences and yet obviously that's not going to be true. Who comes to church? People who need Jesus. What kinds of people need Jesus? People who've got things going on in their life they can't solve, so they come into church, begin to belong to a body and just because you come to Christ doesn't mean your life's just fixed up. We still come and He accepts us, loves us and says now let's take a great journey. Unfortunately on the journey you'll probably upset a lot of people and a lot of people will upset you. Get used to it and learn how to deal with it.

If we learn how to deal with it everything that comes to us is our chance to grow, so we want to look at how to deal with it. But notice what He says here; take heed to yourselves. So Jesus' first priority is that you should when something happens that offends you, the first thing is to focus on yourself and your personal response. Now we would tend to think if someone's upset me my focus is on them and what they did. You did this, you've done that, why did they do that? I don't why they did it, what did they mean? So we go through this tremendous turmoil about what someone else has done and Jesus said take heed to yourself. In

other words carefully guard your condition of heart when you face something that upsets you. How many have had something upset them this week? There's one or two, the rest are sitting on it [Laughter] and I know it did. It's just life. It's called life. You mean to tell me you got through a whole week, 24/7 and no one did anything that upset you? You must have been away on your own. .[Laughter] You know it's not true.

The problem is it's not that the things don't happen, the thing is we don't admit and face the things properly. We don't face the impact of difficulties and setbacks and people on our lives. People are wonderful. They're a great source of blessing, yet they can be a great source of frustration and every married couple said [Amen!] Amen. [Laughter] And would it be true it doesn't matter how spiritual you are that it still happens? I can tell you after all these years of marriage we're still working on stuff. I wonder whether you've got off square one sometimes. No, this is life. Life is about people and people do weird and wonderful things, sometimes intentionally but often unintentionally. The result is we often get hurt and have misunderstandings, but we can use these as a great chance to grow - or we can be terribly stumbled. So first of all let's have a look at this word offence.

Jesus said offences must come. Now when we think about offence this is what most people think. Now actually this is not a Biblical offence, so when Jesus is talking about offences He's not talking about this next thing I'm going to say. Here's what most people think of when they think of an offence. We tend to think an offence is when someone hurt me, you hurt me, or I feel bad after my interaction with you. I came happy and then I went away miserable, so we tend to think well, you've got the problem, you've offended me. This is ridiculous. I'm the one who's got the problem. I came there happy and walked away sad, I'm the one who's got the feelings changed, I'm the one who's got the issue. I'm potentially about to become an offender. See, we tend to get so focussed on other people and what they do, we don't look at our own heart. The Bible says, notice what Jesus said impossible that offences not come. He doesn't tell you in that verse immediately what you ought to do. He says guard yourself first, so we've got to have a look at this issue of offences.

So we tend to think an offence is something someone else does that hurts me and makes me feel bad. Actually your feelings are your feelings. No one is responsible for your feelings but you. Oh well, you make me feel angry. No, no, no, no. No, your anger is your anger, I didn't make you feel angry, you just got angry. It's your response. So while we blame someone else we don't look at what's going on in our own life and we miss the chance to grow. In James 3, Verse 2 it says we all offend in many things. How about that? We all offend in many things, James 3:2. Now that's what the Bible says. We all offend in many things. How many are included in that? All, all of us, we all offend in many things, not just little things and so I may have been a Pastor for many years but the truth of the word says that I offend in many things - still. And it says if any man doesn't offend with his words then he's perfect. Have we got any perfect people here? Please, please can we find the perfect person and get them to put their hand up? Right away, put your hand up, we need to see you. We can all give you a clap. [Laughter] [Shian?] You're asking the wrong person, you've got to ask Kathy [laughs] so - she's shaking her head see.

See, so if any offend not on the word he's a perfect person, he can bridle the whole tongue. So the reality is we all offend in many ways and not only that, most particularly we offend with the words we speak and how we speak and the attitude we speak in. All of us do it, so if all of us do it stop thinking you're better than anyone else. It's time to stop blaming anyone else because actually you and I are all offenders. We all do things that are distressing to other people at various times. It doesn't mean it's always that what we do is bad, it just means it creates difficulties - so what is the Bible meaning for an offence? The word offence in the Bible is the word scandalon in which you get a scandal, a juicy scandal. Have you noticed how juicy scandals are? Scandal is when someone seems to have done something wrong and the newspapers get a hold of it and they start to spread it out. Have you noticed everyone wants to talk about it and spread the scandal? Everyone loves a juicy scandal - did you hear about so and so? Did you read the newspaper? Did you hear what happened to the couple, the prince and princess when they were out there and they were on their honeymoon? Pictures no doubt, topless no doubt - and so scandal is just there everywhere, just goes everywhere.

Whole magazines are devoted to scandals. Get a Woman's Weekly, it's got scandals all over the front page. If they haven't found one they make one up! There's something juicy about scandals. We would think being the church we might be a bit different, but James does say we all offend in many things so we all have scandals going on and we scandalise and upset others so the word scandalon means literally this, now you need to get this really clear. When the Bible is talking about an offence it's talking about setting a trap deliberately that would cause someone to stumble in their walk. I'll say it again. When the Bible is talking about a Biblical offence, it means setting a trap or a snare so that someone coming along trips up and falls and their journey is hindered. Now just have a think about that. Do we make mistakes? Yes, we make mistakes. Do we sin and fail? Yes, we sin and fail. These are not offences necessarily. How I respond is the offence.

You see you've got to think about this, so do we miscommunicate? Yes, we do. I've got atrocious problems at times with that - ask Joy, ask my family, ask the staff. See, sometimes we miscommunicate, we fail to communicate. These are all part of living life and they're areas where we need to grow and mature and develop skills, but they aren't necessarily offences. An offence, a Biblical offence is where I actually set out to do something that will trip up someone else and I'll show you how this happens. You'll be quite surprised when you look at it, so a Biblical offence is when something is set out that deliberately stumbles or I can choose to be stumbled. Now I want to show you how this works out. We're going to just highlight a few examples in the Bible of great offences, so there's some things that offend people. One thing that offends people, Christians particularly and also unbelievers, is the truth, the truth. Truth can deeply offend people, especially if the truth comes in the form of feedback or correction. Now let me ask you this question. How is it possible for you to be a disciple or follower of Jesus without correction? It's impossible and don't think it all comes from Jesus. We actually need others to talk into our life to help us see what we can't see. Don't just be so spiritual you think the Holy Ghost is going to tell you everything. We live in community, we live in relationships and when you're in relationships people get affected by our behaviour and they talk

with us hopefully about what we're doing that actually is creating blocks in the relationship.

So we see then that truth can affect us. We can be affected by the truth. You can't believe the numbers of people and Ian could testify, Lyn will testify, George - any leader here will testify of the numbers of people when we try to speak truth into their heart got highly offended and felt rejected. They interpreted it as a rejection. Here's the thing. When someone speaks truth in your life because they love you and want you to grow, they're helping you get out of sin, not setting a trap to get you into sin. I'll say it again. When someone or particularly a leader or someone, a friend or someone who loves you and cares about you speaks the truth to you, it's to help you get out of sin, not to stumble you into sin. Holding on to an offence will cause you then to stumble others. This is a major difficulty. This is a major challenge. A lot of people don't realise how difficult it is. People are often offended by unmet expectations. We have this expectation - I'm going to show you a few people in the Bible in a moment and every one of these people were offended and instead of choosing to deal with it well, they chose to actually become a stumbling stone and caused huge problems to everyone and themselves as well. It's an amazing thing this thing.

So here's the thing. Unmet expectations, the truth, correction or just disappointments in life, people letting us down or failing in some way all have the potential to stumble us, whether the person did it deliberately or not. So our response is this, our response we choose, so if something has happened in your life that hurts you, at that very moment you have the power to choose life or death, prison or promotion. You can be imprisoned by the things others do because you harbour an offence against them, or you can grow in grace and love and the character of Christ by reaching into God and releasing into that situation the grace of God. Every time someone does not meet expectations, hurts, offends, betrays, lets you down, at that point you have a decision - prison or promotion, imprisoned with the offence by judging or holding it in my heart, or I can be promoted by God if I will release grace into it. I can operate in faith and do it God's way. I can operate in unbelief and do what I feel to do. I'll share what that is mostly for most of us just in a moment.

We choose, so every situation that happened to you last week and the ones this coming week where you got hurt, knocked, disappointed, it is a choice at that moment to bring God and His grace into, or to bring judgement and leave God out of it. If we will bring God into the circumstances of life - you can only do that through relationship with the Holy Spirit. If we will relate to the Holy Spirit in such a way we seek His insight around situations in life, then we can start to change and we grow. Think about this. How many know that Jesus wants you to become like Him? How many understand that? Okay. Would you say He's a fairly forgiving person? So how do you become a forgiving person? Do a lot of worship in church? No. How do you become a forgiving person? You make choices in the face of offences. How do you become a gracious person? Is Jesus full of grace? How do you become gracious? By ministering grace when you have every reason to react and get angry and upset. It's a choice. It's always a choice, always a choice, so what flows out of your life this week when you go out and face all these little disappointments that come, it's a choice.

Our choices can create a huge offence and stumbling, or our choices can bring grace and we grow and become a great person and you become a great person by making lots of little choices regularly over and over and over and over and over. I thank God for the wonderful people around me that show a lot of grace to me. I need every bit I can get [laughs] so here's the thing. When something happens you can either reach out in love and show grace, or you can react and become offended. Once you become offended - now here's where the scandal comes - it's actually sitting in your heart and once you're offended a lot of things are going to happen. Let me just give you how some people responded to offence. I want to go through and just we're not going to look up the scriptures. You can look them up yourself, but let me just give you a few people in the Bible that actually become stumbled by something and at that moment of stumbling they had an offer of a choice to go a different way and they failed to make it. The consequences are unbelievable.

You don't realise that your relationships, your life and what's going on in your family and in your future depends on you not stumbling. It depends on you not stumbling. It depends on you handling things in a Biblical way,

so let me give you a few examples. The first one you can find is found in Genesis 4. It's the guy Cain. Now Cain got offended. Why did he get offended? Because God seemed to accept his brother's offering and didn't seem to accept his offering. Now without going on to the reason about it, God spoke to him and said don't be cast down, don't get all upset about this, just learn from it and grow. But instead he became angry, he became depressed, he hated his brother and then killed him. Now that's in Genesis 4, how a person became offended and an offence ends up with hatred and can end up in murder.

Now you'll find this consistent right through the Bible. Genesis 37, Verse 4 to 8, you'll find - remember another guy Joseph? Now what was great about Joseph?

The first thing was he was the youngest son and his father seemed to like him and gave him a special coat and so the brothers hated him. They were offended by the father and they took out their offence on Joseph. Then Joseph was given some prophetic dreams by God, he had a great dream for his life and he began to out of immaturity share his dreams; I saw this dream and you all bowed down to me, and they hated him more. They were offended by what he seemed to have in God. Don't tell me that doesn't happen in the church - and instead of blessing him they decided to kill him. Don't tell me that doesn't happen in the church. It's true, it's what happens. If we don't deal with offence properly hatred and a spirit of murder will arise in our heart and we will seek to find a way to deal to that person. It always will happen and in very subtle ways. We don't go killing. We find other subtler ways. We'll have a look at that in a moment.

Here's another one. In 1 Samuel 18, Verses 7 to 13, Saul was very offended that David was so popular, so Saul went out one day and he's the king. The next thing you hear is the ladies are singing and they're singing songs to Saul - oh, how lovely. Next thing Saul's killed a thousand, wonderful, isn't that great - then they start singing, but David has killed ten thousand and immediately he's offended. What does he try and do? He immediately tries to kill David. He had hatred in his heart. This is what happens. You find this pattern runs right through the Bible. I'll give you a few more examples of simple ones. Here's one, 2 Kings 5,

Verses 9 to 17, here's another example and in this one here it's Naaman. Now Naaman was a leper and Naaman was looking for a healing, but when he came there he thought the prophet was going to wave his hand over him and say ooh, [POWER!] He thought he'd see that. That's what he came expecting. Instead the prophet didn't even come out to see him. The prophet said just go down in the water and dip in the water seven times in that muddy old stream, you'll be healed - and he didn't even come out and see him. He was offended and furious. He was offended and he was furious and he nearly lost his healing and died prematurely because of offence. Now what was he offended about? He was offended because God did not work in his life the way he expected.

How many know that God doesn't always work in our life the way we expect? You know John the Baptist had the greatest revelation. He was the greatest prophet in the Bible before Jesus and yet sent to Jesus saying are you the one? Jesus said blessed is the man who's not offended in Me. Now why did he do this? Because John, his whole faith had ebbed out. Why? He was offended in his heart at how Jesus didn't come to get him out of the prison. He thought it should be one way, and God had another plan. God's plan was he'd lose his head. That's not a very good plan is it? [Laughter] To have your head cut off? So he was offended Jesus didn't come and recognise him, he was offended because his way of thinking what God ought to do was not the same as what God had in mind. God had in mind he would give his life down for the faith. He would actually - now get this, why is it? What happened? Here's another one that's related to that whole deal. Why is it, he lost his head anyway. Someone else had an offence, Herod's wife and he told Herod's wife the truth, it's not legal for you to marry Herod. It's not legal for you to marry this man, so she got offended and she got full of hate and she waited her moment. One day - now notice this - one day when her daughter has the opportunity of a lifetime, she's danced before the father, the father said wow, I'll give you anything up to half the kingdom - now think about that, anything. Money, riches, half the kingdom, I give it all to you. Now get this; the person with the offence stole away her future by polluting her with the offence and saying I want the head of John the Baptist.

Offences don't just affect us. They overflow and they steal other people's futures. That's why the Bible warns about them. The Bible warns about those by whom offences come. You see this girl's - think about this. If you were the mother and your heart was full of love for your daughter, would you not choose something different than a head of a prophet to give her for a present? It just shows what spirit sat upon her life and the reason it was there was an offence, because she was confronted with the truth. So a spirit of murder came over her, a Jezebellic spirit actually that sought to kill and eventually, when she had her moment, she lashed out and she not only killed John the Baptist. She stole her daughter's inheritance by polluting her. That's a true offence. It wasn't offensive what John said. John spoke the words of truth that would have been able to free her from her bondage. She just reacted with offence and ended up trying to kill him and get back at him. Have you ever notice that happen? Oh, we're getting close to the bone here. I know you'd never do this. Tell someone I know you'd never do anything like this. [Laughs]

One of the things you find keeps coming up - what about the older brother? The older brother in the story of the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son, the Prodigal Son goes out and totally blows it, blows all the money, has a wild life, comes back in, and the father says I want to show you how grace is. It's this big! And he forgives him and clothes him and welcomes him, has a party, and the older brother was offended. Why was he offended? You don't deserve this. The grace of God can be offensive because - this is what the older brother is thinking - I have worked so hard. Why should you get it easy? He was offended. He was offended by grace, offended by goodness. Whoa! And so he got very, very angry. Now one of the things you'll find with every case, the bible is full of them - if you look through every case of this here's the thing you'll find in common. Wherever there's an offence you find walls go up and you'll find inevitably anger and hatred and bitterness and murder come in the heart, every time, every time. I'll show you how it works out.

See, because Jesus said take heed to yourself, what you do take heed to yourself when offences come that they don't get into you, grow in you and then it's got a major hold around your life. Now here's what people normally do. You wouldn't know something like this - when people have

suffered an offence, someone did something to hurt them, someone disappointed them, someone let them down and now it's got in their heart. Now they've got a choice; I minister grace to it, I believe God to help me use it as a stepping stone to go forward, or I harbour offence. Now if a person harbours offence now they're definitely doing the wrong thing. This is what they usually do, they usually have to find someone else to talk to about this thing that's going on in their life. Have you noticed that? That's where the word gossip comes from - so usually what happens is they find someone that they can talk with that will give them a listening ear. They sound people out and usually what they do is repeat their story in a way - and you may have experienced this. You may have even done it, you never know - the repeat the story in such a way that they are painted good and injustice has been done to them, and the other person's painted the villain who should be punished. Have you ever come across something like that? It's always done that way. It's always done that way.

When you hear someone come, they'll paint themselves the hero. They'll paint themselves the good guy. They'll paint themselves as the one who's the victim of injustice and in doing so, are seeking to get something from you. Now the Biblical way if you're upset is not to brood and stew and if you've lost your peace which is the first sign, just go back to the author of peace and say God, where did I lose my peace? What happened in my heart? I need to address it. But you see instead of that, we find someone to talk to and download. Now once you start downloading, that's when you are now spreading offence. You are laying a trap that will stumble someone. They don't even know it. They don't even see it coming. They don't even see. How many of you have talked with someone, and they downloaded some of their stuff and then afterwards you felt quite stirred and agitated and no peace afterwards? It's very common isn't it, and if they were talking about someone else, the next time you saw them you can't even look at them. Something has happened, so this is what is the hidden agenda and I want you have a look at this verse here, Proverbs 26 and Verse 24. We'll read it out in Verse 22. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles. Ooh yes, tell me more! I need to know! And they go right down into the rooms of the belly, right down and affect your spirit. So then it says, Verse 24, he who hates, disguises it with his lips and lays up

deceit within himself; when he speaks kindly do not believe him for there are seven abominations in his heart. Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly. Now what he's really saying is something like this. He's saying that when people have got offences in their heart and hatred in their heart and around it, they will cover it with nice talk, but it will flow out anyway.

You can't stop what's in your heart flowing out. It just naturally flows out, out of the heart we speak. So what happens is we're speaking blessing or we're speaking cursing; we're speaking words that build and edify, or we're speaking words that tear down. We have to make choices around these kinds of things. Now here's the thing. When a person does this to you, and you sit down and give them a good old listening ear, then this is what happens. They have got a hidden agenda around it. This is the agenda; I want to draw you in to what's happening in my life, because I want you to come into agreement with me. I want you to agree that I'm okay feeling this way, so angry about what was done to me. I want you to agree with my feelings, and feel my feelings. I want you to feel angry too. I want you to feel upset too. I want you to feel stirred up. I want you to agree with me, that I am right, that I am fully vindicated in having this thing sitting in my heart. I want you to agree with me - yeah, oh, it's terrible. I want you to agree.

Why do I want you to agree? Because I've got no peace in my heart and I need you to tell me that's okay to hold this thing there, because the Holy Ghost is telling me it's not right to hold it there. I want you to tell me it's okay, so I want you to just agree with me. I want to draw you onto my side, and if I draw you onto my side, then I've now divided you from that person you once knew and were relating quite perfectly well with. I've now created division. Offences created divisions in relationships. Offences in marriage divide the marriage, offences in families divide the family, offences in churches divide the church. This is a spiritual principle. You have to deal with it because there's a fruit of it if it isn't - now what I want you to do is I want you to tell me I'm okay to think that way. I want you to agree with me. Now you don't have to say anything, you just have to listen and say nothing, and there's the problem.

Now there's a way to deal with this thing. Here's the dilemma. If you are listening - now, we all want to help people and so people have got pain in their life. Now if you're going to help a person who's got pain in their life you've got to make sure you are aware of the possibility of being defiled by an offence, so you've got to be aware that they will present their side of the case.

I'll give you two verses on it and I'll show you, there's good Biblical wisdom about this situation. When you sit down to help someone, you listen to them and all of their pain. Now I have been caught by this one over and over and over, listen to them because I cared, listen to them to find out and help them have understanding, and then forgot that actually by not saying something I was ending up agreeing with it - and I didn't agree with it at all. I had to learn that one, and keep learning it. It's easy to be trapped into. I found it easy if you listen to people intently to find what's in their heart, it's very easy to end up being in agreement with what the problem is, or not speaking, and then they feel you're in agreement with them. Silence means agreement so yes, it's great to listen but there are two scriptures you need to keep in mind whenever that person is talking to you. They're found in Proverbs again. Here are the two scriptures to keep in mind; the first one is Proverbs 18 and Verse 17. I learnt this one years ago - I keep learning it over and over. The first one to plead his cause seems right - the first one. So in other words the first one comes and gives you all their story. Oh, that was a dreadful thing that happened, so before you know it you're all wound up and stirred, but it says it's when the other person comes, you hear the other side of the story.

So the first thing to realise is that there is two sides to the story, so when you hear one person you've heard one person, you don't know the truth and you don't know why they've told you. You just know you've heard one side. Here's the second scripture, it's found in a similar place and it's found in Proverbs 18 and Verse 13. Here it is here; He who answers a matter before he hears it, it's a folly and a shame to him - so don't come to conclusions without hearing both sides. Now parents would do well to do that. How many parents have had this experience: mummy, he hit me, he hit me. Oh yes, he picked up one of the blocks and bashed me on the

head, he hit me. Mum: oh ooh oh and so next thing - now, if you could just calm down, you've actually been offended. You've picked up someone's offence and manipulation. They've tried to bring you into agreement and now you turn up there to the other child and now you haven't heard their story. When you hear their story, oh, well he was continually doing this and this and this and I asked him to stop it but he wouldn't stop, so then I hit him. [Laughter]

Now the innocent person is complicit in the problem of strife in the home. Isn't that true? You know that. Why would you think it stops when we get older? Are we all that smart? Do we all grow up that much? I don't think so. [Laughter] We just do the same thing when we get older - find someone who'll listen to us and tell the story, tell our story and they get all upset. Usually they carry an offence. Here's the problem, here's the thing you need to ask is, after you've listened to the person you've got to ask yourself, have I heard both sides of the story? Have I actually given this thing a fair hearing? The second thing you need to be able to ask is, have you gone to the person and sorted it out yourself? It's the strangest thing that the one thing people don't want to do is go to the only person that can sort it out, and sort it out. There's no person can help you sort it out. You've actually got to eventually end up either resolving it before God, or going and talking to the person that needs to be talked to. Have you spoken to someone?

Now this is a real problem in the area of leadership in the church. I'll tell you why. Leaders are no more important than any other person. They just have a different function to other people, but here's the deal. If someone starts to speak and they have an offence - suppose someone has come to Pastor Lyn and got counsel, and the counsel they got, they didn't like because she saw the problem, nailed it, put the truth out and they got offended. So usually the next thing they do is they turn up on someone else's door, another leader, and they don't say that they went to Pastor Lyn. They say I've got this problem you see, and they get the same response there. Now they're offended, so now what they do is they go and tell someone else there's no love here, and they tell them why. That person listens. Now the seeds of division are sown in their heart.

Now here's the problem. If someone divides you against a leader who God placed in your life for your welfare, what happens is distrust is sown against all leaders and you have enough of it in your life and enough people in church today have come in out of broken homes where there's been failures with authorities, failures with fathers, failures with mothers, failures in families; they come in already offended. So they become easily drawn into this kind of thing. Leaders make mistakes like everyone, but once you get an attitude of offence, then you're actually affected in receiving from God, through someone He put in your life to help you. Then you go to the next place, it'll be the same thing there. We can't let these things get in our heart and if there's a resting place for them, we should just come to the Holy Spirit, say I need help to resolve this thing. One of the first things learned as a leader is someone comes for counselling, you say have you been to anyone else? [Laughs] What did they say? Oh, I'm going to say the same thing, you're not going to like me at all either, you know? That's the whole deal. You're all getting real quiet.

Come on, let's have a look in Matthew 18 and see what - it's the other person next to you needed to hear that. I told you that someone needed to hear this. [Laughter] It's good you knew it all. I know that. Isn't that right? I know that. There's lots of things I've known, I've had to learn them over and over again, just keep forgetting. [Laughs] Let's have a look in Matthew, Chapter 18. Very, very clearly he's in the context of talking about heaven and the earth and in Verse 15 he said, if your brother sins against you he actually has done something wrong, not just something you thought was wrong - go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. Now that's Jesus teaching, so Jesus teaches if someone creates a problem for you, does actually do something wrong - not perceived wrong or they didn't do what you wanted or that kind of thing, actually did something wrong, you should go to them and sort it out quickly. Go to him and go alone, just go and talk to them alone, find a way to talk to them. Now if you're going to do that here's the thing you have to realise. The goal is to have a reconciliation. The goal is to stop breaches in relationship. The goal is to draw people together. The goal is to unite because when there's agreement on the earth, then there's a blessing flows from heaven. Now God has set it up that if we're in agreement on the earth, then blessing flows from heaven. If we're believing in Jesus'

name blessing flows. Have you ever thought of this, that if we agree on earth concerning offence we bind the offence and demons can operate? Have you ever thought that when you shared that thing with someone else and came into agreement and spoke against someone, that now you've allowed in the realm of the spirit demonic powers access to that person you were talking about? You agreed to it. We agreed to release judgement rather than grace. You see, when anyone shares something to you about someone else, their failures or perceived miscomings or whatever, at the end of the day whether it's true or not grace needs to come into that situation.

One, you need to make sure you've heard the other side of the case, the other side of the story; two, you listen properly before jumping to conclusions. That's the hardest thing of all is to listen properly and try to find out what the real issue is, that's a whole skill of it's own that requires a heart willingness to listen to people and find where they are. So you've got to make a decision, so Jesus said go to the person so how do we do it? Let me give you two or three things, how you can solve this issue straight away, very, very quickly. Number one, if you have a difficulty, there's something that's gone on, now if it's with God and He didn't do things the way you thought, well then you've got to take that up with God. You've got to go talk to Him about it, always it's go talk with Him about it. Here's number one, bring it to the Lord first, ask the Holy Spirit to help you, and this is what you're looking for. This is what you're looking for - expose your feelings. This is what I'm feeling. You have to talk about your feelings with God, got to talk about your feelings with Him. You've got to get your heart clean before the Lord first of all.

Then if there's any judgements or any issues you're holding in your heart, because often we get upset because we think they meant something and they didn't. We actually assume that they did it for some reason, so sometimes a person can overlook you, do something and they had no intention of doing it, but when you think they intended to do it because they don't like you, you've judged them. You've got something in your heart to deal with. Well we can deal with it easy. We come before the Lord; Holy Ghost, what's my part in this? Holy Ghost, help me to see what I haven't seen. Lord, help me to see and I'll just share my feelings,

I'm really hurt, I'm in pain over this thing. I don't know what to do. Now Lord, is there any part that I've played? Is there any beliefs or judgements in my heart I need to deal with? Lord, I just bring them out and deal with them before you. Now Lord, help me to go to this person so I can restore and rebuild the relationship.

How do you do it? Well very simply, approach the person and ask them for a convenient time and a place to meet. Let them choose the time and the place, don't pressure people. You're going there to talk something out, go and ask them for a suitable time. Tell them there's something you'd like to talk about. Then when you get there, talk quickly and straight. Get to the point and identify hey, this is the specific thing that happened and this is how it's affected me, so use 'I' statements, not 'you,' you did ra, you, you, you, you know? Well now listen, that's just going to get a fist fight going just like that. You think about where the issues in marriages come from - well you, you and you, you, you. The voices rise higher because no one's listening to anyone. It's just getting higher and higher, then there's a shouting match. Then now it's really bad and people say things and they regret later. Now they've got more to overcome.

Just go with a heart to hear, a heart to talk and share and let's see what the Holy Spirit will do. Ask for a suitable time, ask for a suitable place, go there and say this is what the issue is that I'm struggling with. This is what the thing is that's a problem. Put it out just in its facts and how its affecting intimacy, how it's affecting you. Let them see how it's affected you and then listen, understand their position, try and find out what's going on, what happened and what's going on. Then come to a place of agreement; forgive, release forgiveness, bless people, bless people. Let's walk in blessing.

You know something? When something breaks down in a relationship there's always a cost to fixing it. It cost Jesus His life to fix it and here's what it takes. It takes on the part of the person who's sinned against, grace to forgive, and it requires a cost on the part of the person who transgressed, to repent and say I'm sorry. That's how things get fixed up. I'm really sorry and I mean it from my heart, I had no idea, please forgive me - and it requires yes, I will forgive. Let's pray together and walk

together in a flow of unity. That's what it takes. That's what it takes. It always costs. Jesus modelled what it cost. He came from heaven - boy, that's costly, coming to polluted world. That's costly, and then He ministered to people and they hurt Him and wounded Him, put Him on the cross and then on the cross He forgave them. That is really costly, but it also costs something to get the relationship right. We've got to repent, so there's a mutual thing goes on in there. If he repents, forgive him, so release forgiveness.

Here's the other thing then. If someone comes to you with an offence the first thing to remember is guard your heart. Just guard your heart. You're only hearing one side of the story. Ask the appropriate questions and then particularly challenge the person, what stops you going directly to this person to sort it out? What is stopping you? Can I pray with you and help you in this journey of coming and doing it Jesus' way instead of creating a scandal and division in a relationship? There isn't any other way. This is Jesus' way. Jesus' way is grace, truth, forgiveness, that's His way. We've just got to decide whether we'll do it His way or whether we'll let offence sit in us and we become a scandal to those around us, stumbling them. How many times in your journey has someone told you something about someone else that turned out not to be true, but it stumbled you in your relationship with them? Think how often that is and frequent that is. We can do something better than that, we can follow God's way.

I've had many reasons to be offended in all kinds of ways, still do and I've had to learn you just have to rise with grace in your heart, say Jesus, help me to act as You would and be an agent for reconciliation in this situation. Face the pain. Face what's in the heart and the beliefs of the heart. Get your heart free with God and forgive and bless the person. When your heart's free, then talk. If it isn't free you'll argue and you'll get angry, so it won't get any better, it'll get worse. What's in your heart will come out when you meet the person, so better to get your heart free, so when you come you have no agenda but that you be reconciled and restored. This is what God blesses. This is bringing unity. This is bringing healing. This brings wholeness. If we would just practice what Jesus said imagine how different it would be.

Why don't we close our eyes right now. Father, we just honour You and thank you. We thank You for the price You were willing to pay for us to be reconciled. Lord, we open our hearts to You right now for the spirit of God to speak to us. Just while our eyes are closed and heads are bowed, if there's any person here and you are not connected to God, you're not a follower of Jesus, you're disconnected from God, if that's you today what's stopping you making the next step? Jesus died on the cross for your sins. It's a matter of just facing Jesus I need you, I've got sin in my life. I run my life without You and I need Your help. Jesus, I come to You today and believe You died on the cross for my sins and I receive You into my life. What stops you doing that? There's no reason to stop. Just right now, why don't you decide today I want to receive Jesus, I want my sins forgiven and want life walking with God. Would you raise your hand please if that's you today, ready to give yourself to Christ, ready to become a Christian, a follower of Jesus.

If you're ready to do that would you raise your hand? Any person here today who's ready to raise their hand, wanting to become a Christian, give your life to Jesus. Alright, I just want to keep eyes closed for a moment. I just felt God put this on my heart today. I've had it brewing for probably a whole week, but still looking at it in my own heart, my own life. I wonder how many of you heard God speak to you today, heard within the preaching, within the message, you heard God speak to you, the Holy Spirit start to speak to you. There's a lack of peace, there's turmoil in your heart. Turmoil in your heart is not just what other people did or didn't do, it's how you're responding. Whatever anyone else does you can still have it in your heart, but that peace comes at a price. You have to let go trying to bring people into agreement that you're right and they're wrong. You have to make a decision, do I value relationship or would I prefer to be right? That's really where the choice will always come.

I wonder today how many people God was speaking to you? You realise how quickly you take offence, you can think of instances you've taken offence. You can think of times you've shared them with others too. If you're going to share with someone else it should be someone who can help us to do what Jesus said, forgive and bless, go talk to the person, someone who's got the courage to tell us that's wrong doing this. I'm glad

you've shared but here's the right thing to do now to get this thing resolved, go talk to the person.

I've had some people come to me and share with me things, ways in which they had felt I had offended them, they'd harboured deep hurt and grief in their lives and I listened. I just felt my heart break. We don't know how we come across sometimes until someone tells us. It takes great courage to do that. It's always costly to build bridges of relationship. I remember weeping in my heart, telling them how sorry I was, asking their forgiveness - done it many times. Does that mean I don't make mistakes? Not at all. What about you? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What will you do after you leave this meeting? Is there some relationship you need to put right? Is there something you need to get right in your heart? What's stopping you doing it? If God spoke to you today in any kind of way through this message I want you just to raise your hand right now, just raise your hand right now. God bless, many, many hands, many hands up. You know sometimes the greatest offences take place in families and marriages, the ones who are close to us. We can be offended at God, offended at the church, offended for all kinds of things - or we can grow.

What a great day that we make decisions every day, I refuse to harbour offence. I will choose to respond in a Godly way, releasing blessing, not cursing; releasing grace, not judgement; believing God to work good instead of harbouring unbelief. I will operate that way and I thank You Lord, You'll give me the grace to do it. Amen.

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