

## STEPS TO DEALING WITH OFFENSES

By: Minister Micah

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Offenses are a part of life. We exist in the world as a salad of background differences, cultural beliefs, experiences, and values. And, while emotional stability and maturity can play a part in how often we get offended, we can often experience offenses simply from having different points-of-view on life. With the help of the Holy Spirit over years of dealing with my own offenses, God has helped me compile somewhat of a user guide to help walk you through dealing offenses in a productive way. Let us jump into it.

### BEFORE ADDRESSING THE OFFENDER:

1. *Validate yourself.* Go ahead and tell yourself, "You have a reason to be offended." Offense is a you deal, not anyone else's. Since it is a you deal, it is also a you deal to validate you. Many times, we run across people who tell us, "You're getting offended for no reason." This makes us more offended because we feel undermined and misunderstood. But the truth is: You are intelligent enough to know your anger started somewhere. You know yourself better than anyone else, so you know what is worth validating.
2. *Release expectations.* Backgrounds, experiences, differences in opinions, and views on life are what create offenses, and everyone has different origins. Because of this, it is a good thing to tell yourself that your offender may not understand, and, because you all have different backgrounds and views, that is okay.
3. *Do not rehearse how you think the conversation will go.* Rehearsing tough conversations assume that our offender has no thoughts of their own and puts us in a position for three things to happen: (1.) Lean on our own understanding of what we think our offender is thinking, (2.) think *for* our offender, and (3.) give us a false expectation of how we think the conversation should go. All three produce bad outcomes. Our job in addressing offenses is simply to give the offender a chance to understand where we are coming from.

### WHEN ADDRESSING YOUR OFFENDER:

1. *Be short and clear.* I will keep hitting on this: Our job in addressing offenses to give the offender a chance to understand where we are coming from. When doing this, being short and clear is the best option. Too much may cause confusion and/or give them too much to respond to. "If I am the one who is offended, I should be able to say everything I feel." There will be time for that. For now, address the main offense, and take it one step at a time.
2. *Let us not 'should' on ourselves.* A counsellor named Diana Harris once said this, and I loved it (I had to give her credit. I love you, Ms. Harris). Should's do not smell good, and the more they pile up, the more they cause a place to stink and turn things into a fight. It is not a good idea to box somebody in to our values and thoughts by telling them what they "should" do. While we may be right, people entitled to think and live as they see fit. Your "should" may be sound and upright, but it is still your point-of-view. Instead of saying, "You should...", it will be more

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productive to say, "I need..." This addresses your *needs* rather than what you think the offender *should* do.

3. *Do not expect an apology.* This is a tough one to some and may sound negative. Everybody is not going to be apologetic for what they did or said to you. If they apologize, praise God for understanding and remorse. If they are not, just remember the point from earlier: Our job in addressing offenses is simply to give the offender a chance to understand where we are coming from.

### AFTER ADDRESSING THE OFFENDER (REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME):

1. *Thank them for listening.* Thank your offender for listening and at least trying to understand, especially if they come from a completely different background than you. This is not easy for everyone.
2. *Let them know what you agree with.* In the middle of a disagreement, I try to make it a habit to remind people when I agree with them and compliment them for making a lot of sense. It shows them that you are listening and trying to understand where they are coming from without giving up your own beliefs. Sometimes, it will encourage them to look more into *your* view as well.
3. *Resist the urge to repeat yourself.* The Holy Spirit led me here for a reason. I can hear some of you laughing at this one either because you do it, or you know someone who does. To go on repeating what you have already said may suggest that offender did not hear you or understand you the first time. Either suggestion can lead to frustration or your offender hurrying the conversation to be over (which will only lead you to feeling devalued and offend you more). This one take practice for many of us but is a quick-fix for God.

Dealing with offenses can be a great opportunity to learn ourselves more. We learn what offends us. We learn another flaming arrow we can take away from the enemy. We learn what we care about. Things that offend us are usually things we care about, so get a chance to see what matters to us in life. After an offense has been settled, I have heard some people laugh and say, "I did not even know that offended me because I have never heard it said to me before!" So, there is a lot of discovery in our walk with God through offenses. I pray that in all that you gain through your offenses, you gain understanding and a more practical way of making peace.