

Mending Offenses

Unless otherwise stated, the verses quoted in this teaching are cited from the ESV, or English Standard Version.

GIVING NO OFFENSE

A lofty goal stated in Scripture can become a reality in our lives.

1 Corinthians 10:32:

Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,

Wow. “Give no offense” — to anyone, regardless. That isn’t easy in our world. How do you do that? Keep reading.

1 Corinthians 10:33 – 11:1:

just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Christ is our example of how to not give offense. That is why Paul imitated him — so he could become like Christ — and we should do the same.

There’s no doubt that at times people were offended by what Christ did or said — but that’s because their quarrel was with God, not the Son of Man. The reason that his conduct was not offensive is that **Christ did nothing out of self-interest**. In contrast, the only advantage he sought was that of his fellow man.

John 5:30:

“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Did Christ judge? Yes, he did. But in making assessments, he did so by listening to God. When we walk with God, we won’t judge others, holding them to some legalistic, worldly standard. Our core values will be based, not on our own works or personal preferences, but on the

godly principles of God's Word. Our judgment will be just when we seek God's will and not our own.

SELFLESS LOVE

Christ gave no offense because he was selfless. Selflessness is a common thread uniting the first seven characteristics of love listed in

1 Corinthians 13:4-6:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Let's think about each of these character traits for a moment and their connection to [selflessness](#).

- When you're [patient and kind](#), are you focusing on yourself?
- Do you [envy or boast](#) because you're thinking of your neighbor's interest above your own?
- Are you [arrogant or rude](#) out of consideration for another?
- Would you [insist on your own way](#) if you were prepared to yield to your brother's preference?
- Could you justify being [irritable or resentful](#) if you were actively forgiving others?
- How could you [rejoice at wrongdoing](#) if you were thinking of what would benefit the other person?
- When we [rejoice with the truth](#), we're able to look at our fellow man the way God does because we're looking to God first.

Clearly, Christ illustrated for us the essence of [selfless love](#). However, we know that we often fall short of that example. [What can we do to overcome selfishness and not offend others?](#)

OFFENSE AND STUMBLING

Consider what offending is. [Scripture compares offense to stumbling.](#)

Isaiah 8:13-15:

But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

And he will become a sanctuary and a [stone of offense](#) and a [rock of stumbling](#) to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

Stumbling causes us to fall. It can also cause us to be ensnared. [Stumbling is an experience that is common to all men.](#)

James 3:2a:

For [we all stumble in many ways...](#)

Thankfully, our [God has delivered us from stumbling.](#)

Psalms 116:8:

For you have [delivered](#) my soul from death, my eyes from tears, [my feet from stumbling](#);

Proverbs 4:12:

When you walk, [your step will not be hampered](#), and if you run, [you will not stumble](#).

[God stands ready to help us not stumble. It's up to us to avail ourselves of His help.](#) We'll be learning more on this as we delve in.

What happens when you stub your toe or scrape your shin against an obstacle in your way?

- It makes you hurt.
- It makes you angry.
- It could even make you fall.

And what do you say when you strike that obstacle? “Ah, shucks?” “Well, shoot?” “Fiddlesticks?” Not if you’re like me, you don’t!! Stumbling can change your frame of mind in an instant, and usually not in a good way. At that point you probably won’t find it easy to keep your feelings secret!

Isn’t that just like an offense? Yes, it is. As a matter of fact, stumbling is exactly how Scripture portrays the reaction of the unbelieving to the chosen and precious cornerstone, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:6-8:

For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

and “A [stone of stumbling](#), and a [rock of offense](#).” [They stumble because they disobey the word](#), as they were destined to do.

Why does the unbeliever stumble? Because of disobedience to the Word. They don’t want to place their trust in Christ the rock. For them the cornerstone is not the foundation of God’s dwelling place, it’s a protrusion sticking out and getting in their way. They’re offended when they encounter it because all they want to do is to get past it. They’d rather not have anything to do with it.

Amazingly, God in His grace sent Christ to clear the way for even the unbelieving to believe.

Romans 9:30, 31:

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

You would have thought that God's chosen people Israel would have been the ones to get it right and obtain the righteousness God was offering. Instead, they were the ones who failed. Continuing in

Romans 9:32, 33:

Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. [Which was impossible. And the result?] They have [stumbled over the stumbling stone](#),

as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a [stone of stumbling](#), and a [rock of offense](#); and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Here once again, [stumbling is compared to offense](#). The fault is not in the stone — it's just lying there — but in the one stumbling against it.

How true! So many times, we curse the rock in our path, when so often it's "just me, oh Lord," that should have been paying closer attention and avoided harm.

Well, thank God that for us, the Lord Jesus Christ is not a stone of stumbling or a rock of offense. We can be grateful that we will not be put to shame by rejecting God's precious cornerstone.

Nevertheless, because we live in this world, our lives are not conducted perfectly free of offense. As we read earlier in

James 3:2:

For [we all stumble in many ways](#). And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

James, the author of this epistle, must have had intimate knowledge of his human frailties, having grown up in the same house with the Lord Jesus Christ as his big brother. Sibling rivalry can be a challenge in any family, but how much more when brothers and sisters were aware from an early age that their brother was to be the savior of the world! They must have certainly been tempted to become jealous and resentful at times.

Matthew 13:53-58:

And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there,

and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas [also called Jude, as we'll see later]?

And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

And they took [offense](#) at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”

And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

It took the members of Jesus' own household some time to get over the obstacles in their relationships. But we shouldn't be too critical of them. We all stumble and become offended in many ways, whether at home or when we're out and about in the community.

Despite our best efforts, we sometimes discover we have offended another person without in any way having intended to do so. It may be a stranger — the man in the street, so to speak — but it can just as easily be a brother or sister, a spouse or a housemate, a friend or even a close confidant. Many times, these are the situations that seem most daunting to resolve because we value that relationship so much.

Proverbs 18:19:

A [brother offended](#) is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle.

When we make a brother bristle, walls may be erected, barring us from the unhindered fellowship we previously enjoyed. Maybe the

fault was indeed mine. How can I restore our relationship to the point where trust is reestablished?

MAKING AMENDS

Jesus showed us [how to make amends](#) in

Luke 17:3,4:

[Pay attention to yourselves!](#) [which is the first thing any of us can do to keep from stumbling] If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,

and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, [‘I repent,’](#) you must forgive him.”

Clearly, this is not salvation repentance. To [repent](#) in this context is to [express regret for an offense against a brother](#). When we acknowledge such a failure, it clears the air and we can ask forgiveness if needed. Jesus further elaborated on such situations in

Matthew 18:15:

If [your brother sins against you](#), go and tell him [his fault](#), between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

This can't be talking about a sin against God. Here, [sinning against a brother](#) is called [a fault: an offense against a brother, a rift in a relationship](#).

Jesus' brother James had this to say about mending relationships in the face of such divisions.

James 5:16a:

Therefore, [confess your sins to one another](#) and pray for one another, [that you may be healed...](#)

Evidently, this is not saying we are obliged to confess all our sins to another mere mortal. The context of James 5 is talking about [forgiveness in relationships: admitting our part in any wrongs between us](#). Freely admitting having offended a brother can pave the way for forgiveness and reconciliation. This is a powerful truth to observe in

TAKING ACTION TO BE RECONCILED

Jesus placed the responsibility for being reconciled with an offended brother squarely on our shoulders.

Matthew 5:23,24:

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that **your brother has something against you**,

leave your gift there before the altar and go. **First be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and offer your gift.

We are not to dismiss the concerns of a brother as unimportant. If he genuinely has an issue with you and you have somehow wronged him, you need to address it, and not just eventually, but in the present.

Ephesians speaks of the importance of **taking care of conflicts as they arise**.

Ephesians 4:26,27 [Weymouth]:

If angry, beware of sinning. Let not your irritation last until the sun goes down;

and do not leave room for the Devil.

So what are some appropriate **actions we can take towards reconciliation**? We can:

- **Acknowledge** having crossed a line
- **Express regret** for any wrong we may have done
- **Admit our part** if we have somehow wronged our brother

Let's consider these now in greater depth.

ACKNOWLEDGING HAVING CROSSED A LINE

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of **sinning against a brother**?

Let's read Matthew 18:15 again.

If **your brother sins against you**, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

What kind of sin is this?

The Greek word for sin (ἁμαρτία *hamartía*) is derived from archery and signifies **missing the mark or target**. So what is the target? Matthew answers this question several chapters later.

Matthew 22:37-40:

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment.

And a second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**.

On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

How simple and how beautiful! Sin in the context of our relationship with God is not to love Him with all our heart, soul and mind. **Sin in the context of our relationship with each other is not to love our neighbor as ourselves.**

So it’s not so hard to figure out after all. The law of love governs our relationship with God, and our relationship with men. **If I miss the target of love with my fellow man, it is sin against him.**

Understanding this, when is our recommended course of action

EXPRESSING REGRET FOR WRONGS

Earlier we read in Luke how we are to forgive a brother who has sinned against us and says “I repent,” even if he’s done it seven times in the same day.

What kind of repentance is this?

The Greek word for “repent” (μετανοέω *metanoēō*) denotes a genuine change of heart towards a brother, not only regretting one’s past action but also making a determination to change for the better. After acknowledging your fault or miss, you move forward with resolve and without further regret. You turn the page and turn a corner.

For a more contemporary understanding of this passage, let’s also read it in Weymouth.

Luke 17:3,4 [Weymouth]:

Be on your guard. "If your brother acts wrongly, reprove him; and if he is sorry, forgive him;

and if seven times in a day he acts wrongly towards you, and seven times turns again to you and says, 'I am sorry,' you must forgive him."

Returning to our earlier discussion of targets, what should we be aiming at in such situations? The one who has wronged his brother should seek to set things right. The one who has been wronged should be ready to forgive.

We have established the basics of what constitutes sin in a relationship — missing the mark when it comes to love — and when it may be appropriate to express regret for wrongs against a brother. But when should we ever consider

ADMITTING OUR PART IN WRONGS DONE

Circumstances may arise where each of us has wronged the other in some way. In that case, each should be willing to admit his part in the fault, and each should be prepared to forgive the other.

Romans 13:8:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

To take a closer look at this, let’s read James 5:16 again.

James 5:16a:

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed...

What kind of sins is this verse telling us to confess? James tells us in an earlier verse.

James 2:8,9:

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Partiality is an example of sinning against your brother, [infringements on the law of love](#). These kinds of faults isolate and separate us.

James exhorts us to [admit when we've wronged each other](#) and what's more, to [pray for one another so that any rifts between us may be healed](#). And what does he say further about such prayer? Let's keep reading in

James 5:16b:

... The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

What a great promise to avail ourselves of!

We have seen that brother may sin against brother, missing the mark on love, and that brothers should feel free to admit fault when wrong and be willing to forgive the other when wronged.

To cement the reconciliation, [we pray for each other, knowing that our prayer has great power as it is working](#). And therein lies the healing! How uplifting and encouraging!

But there's one more thing. What can we do about

REMOVING STUMBLING BLOCKS

How can we proactively avert offenses from happening? [How can we remove stumbling blocks in our relationships?](#)

Perhaps some of you may have noticed a pattern where almost before you know it, some word or action (real or perceived) triggers you into offending another person when that may have been the farthest thing from your intention under the circumstances. What then?

You might then ask yourself, “What am I stumbling against?” There must be a stone in your life that you’re striking up against, causing you to be offended. What is it?

Many times, the [stony obstacle](#) we are facing is within ourselves: in our hearts, we are [judging others](#). Maybe we have been mulling over a real or perceived injustice, and judging other people accordingly. That’s measuring them by legalism and not grace.

What can you do to avoid doing this? Resolve issues as soon as you become aware of them. Build habit patterns of withholding judgment rather than pronouncing sentence on someone else.

Proverbs admonishes us to go even further and seek to cover and overlook offenses.

Proverbs 17:9:

Whoever [covers an offense](#) seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.

Proverbs 19:11:

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to [overlook an offense](#).

With God’s help, we can seek love and resolve to be slow to anger. We can even come to the point of actually priding ourselves on overlooking offenses (as opposed to prosecuting them).

AVERTING OFFENSES

Romans 14:13 is the clarion call on how to avert offenses.

Romans 14:13:

Therefore **let us not pass judgment** on one another any longer, but rather **decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.**

The admonition is clear: **Don't pass judgment. Judging others puts a stumbling block in your brother's path.** Decide now to help your fellow believer stand, not trip or get hurt.

When we partner with God and receive His grace as a reality in our hearts, we will start listening to our brothers and sisters and will learn to look favorably on them because of what Christ did for them. As it says in

2 Corinthians 6:1-4a:

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,

but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way:...

Here we are exhorted to put no obstacle in anyone's way, and to commend ourselves to others in every way.

Selfless love is what will enable us to do this.

1 John 2:10:

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

When are we most likely to stumble? When we can't see, in the night. When is there no reason to stumble? When we can see exactly what's

ahead of us. How truly liberating this is! **We need not stumble when we walk in love because we're walking in the light.**

We will be able to avert offenses when we:

- **Stop passing judgment.**
 - Don't judge yourself, and don't judge others.
- **Act selflessly in love.**
 - See your brother in Christ as God does, looking to God first.

Like James, Jude had to eventually reconcile himself to who his older brother Jesus really was. He finally came to the place where he recognized the truth and believed on him as his Lord and Savior.

Jude 24, 25:

Now to **him who is able to keep you from stumbling** and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

What a tangible change in Jude's life! For though we all stumble, the psalmist reminds us in

Psalm 119:165:

Great peace have those who love your law; **nothing can make them stumble.**

When we love, we don't judge; and nothing can make us stumble or offend.

God bless you. I love you, my brothers and sisters.