

Lesson 30

Becoming Offended

Icebreaker:

What is one thing that people do that really offends you?
How does it make you feel?

Introduction:

After descending the Mt of Transfiguration Jesus had an encounter with a demon-possessed child before continuing His journey back to Capernaum where we find the tax gatherers confronting Peter regarding he and Jesus' temple tax obligation, in which Jesus reply's by instructing Peter in this matter, ". . . *so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me,*" Matthew 17:24-27. Jesus used this conversation with Peter as a means to introduce the subject of "Offenses" to His disciples.

Read:

Matthew 17:14-27, Mark 9:14-38, Luke 9:37-49

A Demoniac Son is Healed

Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-29, and Luke 9:37-42

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible, authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a Journey with Jesus)

And when they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. And immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed, and began running up to greet Him. And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out. And I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it." And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!" And they brought the boy to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" And Jesus said to him, "'If You can!' All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief." And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. And when He had come into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Jesus Prophesies His Death **Matthew 17:22-23, Mark 9:30-32, and Luke 9:43-45**

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And from there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He was unwilling for anyone to know about it. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears; the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved. But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

The Question of the Temple Tax **Matthew 17:24-27**

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And when they had come to Capernaum, those who collected the **two-drachma tax** came to Peter, and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" And upon his saying, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Consequently the sons are exempt. But, lest we give them offense, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

The two-drachma tax. This tax was imposed annually on all males 20 years of age or older for the maintenance and upkeep of the Temple. It amounted to two days wages.

Humble Yourselves ... Serve Other Believers **Matthew 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-37, and Luke 9:46-48**

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And when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." And taking a child, He set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And taking him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me; for he who is least among you, this is the one who is great."

Group Discussion:

1. What do you think of people, who talk about themselves all the time and brag about their accomplishments?
2. Is it offensive to you? Why?

Introduction continued:

Knowing that the disciples had been discussing who was the greatest among them, Jesus **doesn't take offense** at it or rebuke them. Instead, He gently begins to instruct them about the subject of greatness. He starts by seating a child in front of them and then makes two profound statements:

- a) Unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.
- b) Whoever humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus then takes the child into His arms and makes three more statements:

- c) Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me.
- d) Whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent me.
- e) He who is least among you, this is the one who is great.

Group Discussion:

3. Take a few minutes to reflect on what Jesus had to say in the five statements and write down any observations you made.
4. What qualities do children have that adults **tend** to lack?
5. What childlike quality do you need to recapture?

Reading The Scripture:

Mark 9:38-41, Luke 9:49-50

Cooperate With Other Believers

Mark 9:38-41 and Luke 9:49-50

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John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who shall perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

The Command:

1. Do not hinder him.

The Lesson:

Many times, Christians become offended at others who claim to be Christians, but don't hold to the exact form of belief they do. In other words ... they're not orthodox. The number of denominations of Christianity that exist on this planet today evidences this. Add to those all the independent and house churches and we see that there are an awful lot of people who claim to follow Christ in this world that don't always see eye to eye on issues of doctrine.

Jesus addressed a **similar** issue when the apostle John approached Him saying, "*we saw someone casting out demons in Your name and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us.*" Jesus could have taken offense at the other person like His disciples had but chose not to. Instead, He told the disciples not to **take** offense by explaining, "*He who is not against us is for us.*" Then He told them not to **give** offense when He said, "*Do not to hinder him.*"

By using the "hinder" Jesus gave His disciples a chance to reflect on ways they could be giving offense to others. For example:

- a) Do not put a stumbling block in his way.
 - By **requiring** him to be a member of our group.
 - By **discrediting** him to others.
 - By **rebuking** him.
- b) Do not restrain him.

- From **doing** the work of the ministry.
- From **using** the name of Jesus.

Being able to **identify** whether someone is for or against Christ is invaluable for Christians. For example, the Apostle Paul cautioned Christians to “*not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?*” (2 Corinthians 6:14-15) How then can Christians determine whether someone **they do not know** is for Christ or against Him? Jesus gave his disciples two signs to look for: 1) Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God, used in conjunction with the name of Jesus and 2) Fruit of the Spirit, which is the love of God, used in conjunction with the name of Jesus.

The first indicator or sign that a person is a believer in Jesus Christ is the use of spiritual gifts. “*These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*” (Mark 16:17-18) When the disciples saw the individual casting out demons in Jesus’ name they could be assured that it was by the power of God.

Exorcisms existed at the time of Jesus and were recognized as a work of God. An exorcism was viewed as the kingdom of God coming into conflict with the kingdom of Satan. It was considered part of God’s covenant with Israel; that He would deliver or save His people from their enemies. This can be evidenced by Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees who accused him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. “*Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges.*” (Matthew 12:25-27)

Jesus knew that it was the Holy Spirit who delivers or saves people and went so far as to say that **speaking against** the Holy Spirit was the unpardonable sin. “*He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*” (Matthew 12:30-32) Therefore, when the disciples came to Jesus saying they saw someone casting out demons in His name, He realized that it was the Holy Spirit working through him.

Some people use the name of Jesus to work a miracle, but if they don’t belong to Him it has no effect. A case in point occurred in about 54 AD when the Apostle Paul was at Ephesus. *But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.* (Acts 19:13-17)

The second indicator or sign that a person is a believer in Jesus Christ is when he evidences the fruit of the Spirit or the love of God. *By this all men will know that **you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*** (John 13:35) This can be observed when someone does an act of kindness to another because he is a fellow Christian. Jesus put it this way. *“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.”*

The Point Of The Lesson:

Guard against becoming easily offended by fellow believers.

Application:

If a fellow believer offends you this next week, reflect on **why** you became offended and **how** you handled it.