

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 62 – Offenses

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People get offended for various reasons, but the greatest offense we can have, is offense against the Word of God. Why is this offense so great? If we are offended against the Word of God, it will affect every area of our life in how we respond to and treat God. In addition, it will affect how we respond to and treat our fellow man. Offense against God's Word affects how we live our life, whether it is lived in victory or in total defeat. It affects whether we live the abundant life as God intends for us to live, or whether we *stumble and fall* into destruction.

The Dictionary defines *offense* as, an act of stumbling, a cause or occasion of sin: a 'stumbling block'. What's more, the Dictionary defines *stumbling block*, as an impediment to belief or understanding.

Look what happened when Jesus taught in the Synagogue in His hometown. Some of the people present were amazed at His teachings. Yet, others in the crowd asked disparaging questions of Jesus. They asked about the origin and the wisdom of His teaching. In spite of His impressive words, He obviously was too ordinary for them, so they ridiculed Him,

**Mark 6:3 (Amp Bible)** – *Is not this the Carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here among us? And they took offense at Him and were hurt [that is, they disapproved of Him, and it hindered them from acknowledging His authority] and they were caused to stumble and fall.*

Their question, "Is not this the Carpenter?" was their way of saying, 'Look at Him...Jesus is nothing special, He is just a common laborer like the rest of us.' Because they took *offense* at Him, Jesus was not able to do one work of power there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was unable to bless them in abundance, as He desired.

**Mark 6:4,6 (Amp Bible)** – *But Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor (deference, reverence) except in his [own] country and among [his] relatives and in his [own] house... And He marveled because of their unbelief (their lack of faith in Him). And He went about among the surrounding villages and continued teaching.*

Their unbelief did not stop Him. Jesus will not force anyone to believe in His teachings. Jesus just kept moving among the surrounding villages and teaching the truth. It is to our detriment if we refuse the teachings of Jesus. If we take offense at Jesus' Words, it hinders us from seeing the truth and applying that truth in our own lives, truth which opens the door to spiritual freedom.

At another time when Jesus was teaching, His disciples began complaining bitterly, protesting the Word of God. It became an *offense* to them, an occasion of *stumbling*.

**John 6:60-61 (Amp Bible)** – *When His disciples heard this, many of them said, this is a hard and difficult and strange saying (an offensive and unbearable message). Who can stand to hear it? [Who can be expected to listen to such teaching?] But Jesus, knowing within Himself that His disciples were complaining and protesting and grumbling about it, said to them: Is this a stumbling block and an offense to you? [Does this upset and displease and shock and scandalize you?]*

Jesus could easily ask the same thing of us today. *Does My Word upset and offend you? Does it disturb and disgust you?* If we do get offended at Jesus' Word, that leaves us in the ill-fated (disastrous) condition of being unprepared to deal with the offenses of others.

**Proverbs 18:19 (Amp Bible)** – *A brother offended is harder to be won over than a strong city, and [their] contentions separate them like the bars of a castle.*

As long as we are living on this earth among people, there will always be people who rub us the wrong way. When someone pushes our hot button, we can ‘go off on them’, letting our flesh control us, hell-bent on giving them a piece of our mind. Get a clue, no one wants a piece of our mind; they will just hurl back the same angry words we hurled at them. It is a dead end.

**Proverbs 17:14 (NIV)** – *Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.*

Jesus instructs us to respond to the best, the superior choice available to us. After all, it is not a matter of counting to ten, taking a time out when offenses come; which only brings temporary relief. Rather, it is a matter of *counting our blessings* that we have the peace of God ruling our lives.

**Psalms 119:165 (Amp Bible)** – *Great peace have they who love Your law; nothing shall offend them or make them stumble.*

Peace, *great peace*, starts with loving the spiritual law of God. You may not have thought about it this way, but when you let *offense of the Word* take hold of you, you are dangerously in the act of stumbling, or falling away from God (His Word). It is essential to our spiritual growth that we learn to love God’s law and reap the benefit of the great peace it offers. It is so vital to our well-being that the apostle James calls it the Royal Law.

**James 2:8 (KJV)** – *If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*

Brothers and sisters this is *the Royal Law*, because it comes from Jesus, the King of Kings. We do well to reverence and honor Him by following this Royal Law, because this is the exact point Jesus made to the lawyer who questioned him.

**Matthew 22:36-40 (KJV)** – *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

God has always given ample instruction to His people to uphold His superior law of love.

**Leviticus 19:18 (KJV)** – *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.*

Brothers and sisters do not be easily offended. Matthew records Jesus making this bold promise to those who take no offense at Him or His Word,

**Matthew 11:6 (Amp Bible)** – *And blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied) is he who takes no offense at Me and finds no cause for stumbling in or through Me and is not hindered from seeing the Truth.*

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### Questions for Personal or Group Study

(Please do not mail to CA for grading):

- 1 - The greatest *offense* we can have is offense against the Word of God. Why is this offense so great?
- 2 - The Dictionary defines *offense* as, an act of stumbling: a ‘stumbling block’. How does *offense* actually block or impede one’s belief and understanding of God’s Word? **Mark 6:3**
- 3 - When Jesus’ disciples complained, protested, and grumbled about His teachings, how did He respond to them? **John 6:60-61**
- 4 - If we let *offense* against God’s Word take hold of us, how will this affect our relationship with others? **Proverbs 18:19**
- 5 - *Offense* against a brother can lead to the desire to give them a piece of our mind. Why would this response result in a dead end? **Proverbs 17:14**
- 6 - How do we go about fulfilling the Royal Law that Jesus, the King of Kings gave to us? **James 2:8**
- 7 - What bold promise does Jesus make to those who take no offense in Him and His Word? **Matthew 11:6 & Psalm 119:165**

