

Cultivating Connection

A biblical approach to relationship challenges

led by Mary Lowman

November 19, 2024

Review

In our first session we began our series on cultivating connection with a discussion of our first and foremost need to continually cultivate our connection with God through Jesus Christ. And when that is our highest priority, then it spills over to all the relationships in our lives.

"If you love me, keep my commands. . . Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching" (John 14:15, 23a).

Are you in the seat of the offender or the offended?

These are two seats, two situations which always create issues in relationships. We'll see what happens when we occupy either of these seats and how to get out of them.

The Seat of the Offender

Offending others can either be intentional or unintentional.

First, what would cause someone to **intentionally try to hurt** someone else?

There are many relationships that have been in a cycle where one small offense generates another in return, and that has become the norm for that relationship.

Have you ever thought about how powerful jealousy can be?

Proverbs 27:4: *Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?*

Jealousy in the life of a true believer comes from not being content with who we are or what we have.

Philippians 4:12: *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

Jealousy—lack of contentment—begins in your mind.

2 Corinthians 10:5: *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Matthew 15:18 – 19a: *But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts...*

What are some other reasons we may plop ourselves down in the seat of the offender?

How do you get yourself out of these intentional times you may choose to sit in the seat of the offender?

- You choose NOT to respond when someone hurts you.
Luke 6:29: *If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.*
- You choose to give the other person the benefit of the doubt.
- You do not talk about it behind their back, but if need be, you go to them in person and try to resolve the issue.

Unintentional Offenses

We can cause hurt and offense much more easily than we ever realize. What are some of the unintentional things we can do which can be interpreted as offensive?

Our choice of words is probably our easiest pitfall.

Ephesians 4:29: *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

The right words with the wrong tone of voice can still be offensive.

We can unintentionally offend others by our body language, which again is louder than the words we say.

So, how do we know when we've offended someone unintentionally?

Pray that God will make you sensitive so that you are more aware of when you are unintentionally sitting in the seat of the offender.

Have you ever thought seriously about what Jesus was saying in this verse:

Matthew 12:36: *But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.*

Empty words—what a good description of much of what we say.

Proverbs 17:27 – 28: *The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent and discerning if they hold their tongues.*

Proverbs 25:11 (ESV): *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*

Romans 12:18: *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Romans 12:10: *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

When you honestly try to honor others above yourself, that will keep you out of the seat of the offender.

The Seat of the Offended

If you are in the offended seat, it is because you are choosing to sit there.

What does God say we should do when we've been offended?

Matthew 5:43 – 44: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

Matthew 10:36: *And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.*

Romans 12:14: *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

Proverbs has some very wise advice for those who have been offended.

Proverbs 19:11: *A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*

Proverbs 17:9: *He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*

Proverbs 18:19: *An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.*

The longer you sit in the seat of the offended, the harder it is to get out of it. It becomes addictive; it starts to become your identity.

To get out of the seat of the offended, you do have to forgive the offender. And that can be truly difficult, especially if the offense is deep and there has been no recognition or apology. I can't tell you when, but I can assure you that someday every wrong will be made right.

I ask you to examine yourself and see if you are sitting in the seat of the offender or the offended. You really don't want to be in either one. You can be set free the very day you decide that you're really tired of being offended, and you don't want to offend others anymore.

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Breakout Rooms 1-5 Case Study:

Case Study #1: There is a person in your family who is jealous of you because of your success and your financial security. You've worked hard to achieve your career success; nothing has been given to you. Nonetheless, she takes her jealousy out on you any time the family is together. With Thanksgiving coming up next week, your family will gather as usual, and you know it will be uncomfortable to be with her. Usually, you end up with your feelings hurt because of the way she talks to you. What could you do to try to keep yourself out of the seat of the offended – and maybe help her to stay out of the offender seat?

Breakout Rooms 6-10 Case Study:

Case Study #2: A coworker has suddenly started treating you differently. Up until recently you had a nice working relationship, but for reasons you don't know, she hardly speaks to you now and when she does, it is not with a pleasant tone. You're wondering if you have unintentionally offended her. What could you do to get out of the seat of the offender?