



**Teacher:** John Burton

**Teaching Title:** Unoffendable

- I. The Poison of Offense
  - a. Kelly McCann: “Whatever it takes to offend you is all it takes to defeat you.”
    - i. Story of Michael Tyrell and healing of my lungs
      - 1. We must go much deeper into the realm of forgiveness and blessing than we realize.
      - 2. There are open doors that are hiding behind our lack of concern.
  - b. The greater the mission, the greater the opportunity for offense.
    - i. “Great peace have they which love thy law: And nothing shall offend them.” (Psalm 119:165, KJV 1900)
    - ii. “Whenever we treat people honorably, even if they refuse to honor us, we demonstrate that we have a standard within us that isn’t determined by the people around us. We don’t just honor people because they are honorable, we honor people because we are honorable.” ~Unknown
  - c. I’ve heard it said that offense is the result of entitlement, self-centeredness and victimhood.
    - i. In ministry and in our lives as Christians, we will have continual opportunity to be offended.
      - 1. Pastors are the most abused people in the church when it comes to gossip, which is the manifestation of entitlement. Entitlement is a catalyst for offense.
    - ii. Story of megachurch leader testing my propensity to be offended.
      - 1. It was a test I had to pass if I was to be qualified for ministry.
      - 2. Was it fair? NO!
        - a. Nothing about Christianity is fair.
        - b. If you demand to be treated fairly, you are affirming your rightful place in Hell.
        - c. There is nothing fair about Heaven, about the gift of salvation, about being forgiven, about the gift of the Holy Spirit, about deliverance. Nothing.
        - d. We deserve Hell.
    - iii. To qualify for ministry we must be unoffendable, and we must pass tests that put stress on our tendency to react to unfair treatment.
      - 1. Francis Frangipane—Today, there are preachers who are afraid to preach truth for fear people will react and leave the church. The end result is a church of easily offended people who cannot grow beyond their inability to accept correction.

2. Our ministry requires we rightly handle betrayal, rejection, gossip and attacks against us.
  - a. We have become experts at “right vs. wrong” in this generation.
  - b. The church is pointing fingers, blaming, accusing and attacking those who have “done them wrong.”
3. “An offended heart is the breeding ground of deception.” -- John Bevere
  - a. I preached this message at a church in transition in Michigan.
    - i. They were upset at their denominational leaders and their interference in the search for a new pastor.
    - ii. They even shouted out in the middle of my teaching, “We want John Burton to be our next pastor!”
    - iii. I immediately discerned offense and was determined to preach them out of it!
    - iv. At the end they repented and decided to submit to their leadership.
    - v. An amazing pastor was appointed and the church has been contending for revival ever since.
  - d. Offense threatens our salvation, our eternity.
    - i. *“And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.”* (Matthew 24:10–12, ESV)
      1. The KJV says, “many will be offended.”
      2. Skandalizō: to be offended, to fall away
      3. If we walk in offense, we are in the process of falling away.
      4. If we cause offense, we are causing others to fall away.
        - a. This is why Jesus instructed Peter in Matthew 17 to go fishing, find money in the fish’s mouth and to pay the tax.
        - b. It was to ensure the people expecting them to pay tax would not be offended.
        - c. *“A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.”* (Proverbs 18:19, NKJV)
          - i. Offense is a death sentence!
          - ii. It imprisons.
          - iii. It ensnares.
      5. If your emotional health is dependent on you being right, you will not last. You will not endure. You are at great risk of falling away!
      6. *“A man’s stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth; From the produce of his lips he shall be filled. Death and life are in the power of*

*the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Proverbs 18:20–21, NKJV)*

- a. When we are offended, we vomit out that offense in the form of complaint and gossip.
    - b. Our offense is a self-fulfilling prophecy as it literally brings death.
    - c. Our offense, our gossip, our hatred is infectious as it spreads to those we are offended at.
    - d. Again, offense is directly tied to salvation. Falling away begins at the moment we are offended.
      - i. And, someone else’s offense that comes as a result of our verbal assault is the beginning of their falling away.
    - e. *“Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 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.” (1 Corinthians 10:32–33, ESV)*
  - e. Look at the extent that we are called to go to ensure we don’t offend others:
    - i. *“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: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” (2 Corinthians 6:2–10, ESV)*
- II. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
- a. Offense tracks back all the way to the Garden of Eden
  - b. There are two trees by which we can live:
    - i. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
    - ii. The Tree of Life
  - c. The TKGE pumps out the fruit of offense.
    - i. I'm right, you're wrong
    - ii. You hurt me
    - iii. You made a bad decision

- iv. You don't care about me
- v. My boss is horrible.
- vi. I blame that politician.
- vii. I blame my parents.
- viii. My pastor doesn't care
- d. It's nearly impossible for people to have a conversation on social media without getting offended or causing offense.
- e. The reason 'Christians' so often look defeated, angry, bitter, hopeless and desperate is because they looked to the rules and regulations of TKGE as their bridge to God.
  - i. These rules have left them spiritually dead.
  - ii. The key difference between Christians and the lost is not the ability to keep rules or even our different beliefs. It's that we have found life and they have not yet found life.
    - 1. Formulas will never set us free.
    - 2. Mere knowledge will never give us life.
- f. Have you ever heard someone say they are going to heaven because they are a "good person?"
  - i. The reality is that Christians who are living in the TKGE have the exact same attitude.
  - ii. A person living in the Tree of Life loves and serves in the spirit of TRUTH (Jesus) while those living in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil are fueled by FACTS.
- g. *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." (Genesis 3:1–7, ESV)*
  - 1. Interestingly, Satan appealed to Eve's desire for godliness... but, while it resulted in knowledge it was void of life. A form of godliness but void of power.
  - 2. Their recognition of their own nakedness was correct, but it was different than the revelation that God wanted for them.

3. He wanted them to be childlike, but now they didn't have that capacity.
  4. Kids are dependent, innocent, needy, vulnerable, fragile.
  5. Those that surrender dependence become self-sufficient (fig leaves), no longer innocent (no payment for their sin), protective, defensive, proud, puffed up.
  6. When they ate of the tree, they became servants to it.
- h. *"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—' therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."* (Genesis 3:22–24, ESV)
  - i. *"And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'"* (Genesis 3:17–19, ESV)
    - i. The Tree of Life grew out of the same ground that God created Adam from.
      1. It was there to feed them.
      2. Now, the tables were turned.
      3. They were now assigned to serve the ground, to till it.
      4. Their knowledge of good and evil resulted in slavery.
    - ii. Many Christians live their entire lives in the TKGE.
      1. *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."* (John 5:39–40, ESV)
        - a. Remember, we are pursuing TRUTH ahead of FACTS.
        - b. If we live in the TKGE we tend to always blame.
          - i. Parents
          - ii. Pastors
          - iii. Politicians
          - iv. Bosses
          - v. The way we were raised
          - vi. Unfair treatment
    - iii. *"He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.'" Then the LORD God*

*said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*" (Genesis 3:11–13, ESV)

1. Blame!
- j. The TKGE always makes us point at somebody and say "I can't, because they didn't," but the TOL says, "I can, no matter what they do."
  - i. *"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*" (John 8:31–32, ESV)
  - ii. Adam and Eve were abiding with God until they traded truth for knowledge.
  - iii. Facts have the power to divide, but truth delivered in love, with mercy, as they are written on your own heart, will result in favor with man! It's a powerful contrast!
    1. *"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."* (Philippians 2:1–4, ESV)
    2. Whenever two disagree, the result must be agreement!
    3. The tree of knowledge of good and evil just grows and grows as we attempt to figure out right vs. wrong!
    4. We must learn to die to our opinions!
    5. This tree is absolutely deadly.
- k. Remember, offense is tied to salvation and eternity.
  - i. *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* (Matthew 24:9–14, ESV)
    1. That verse reveals three things that will happen if we allow ourselves to become offended:
    2. Betrayal, hatred and cold love.
    3. This is the enemy at work to divide and conquer!
    4. Gossip is actually revenge and hatred!
    5. For someone who is offended, betrayal, hatred and cold love all go hand in hand.

6. The last verse told us to endure. If we are to endure we have no choice but to deal with every issue that has an opportunity to cause us offense.
7. We don't have the option to be offended, to withdraw.
- ii. Instead of resisting the enemy, Eve embraced the enemy.
  1. The allure of the enemy's promise was overwhelming.
  2. The fruit was good to eat, the tree was beautiful to look at and the promise of being "as a god" was too great a temptation.
  3. When we force our viewpoint as a weapon, we are anointed by Lucifer himself as we eat of the fruit of FACTS.
    - a. We'll find ourselves unable to connect with God.
    - b. We won't be able to forgive.
    - c. We'll do everything we can to prove our point.
    - d. Gossip will be what makes us feel good about ourselves!
- iii. *"Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage." (Jude 14–16, NIV84)*
  1. Judgment is coming for the ungodly.
    - a. Harsh words
    - b. Grumblers
    - c. Fault-finders
    - d. Boasting
    - e. Seeking their own advantage
      - i. This is the TKGE lifestyle!

### III. The Tree of Life

- a. When people negatively affect our lives, we heap blessings upon them!
  - i. We smile a lot!
  - ii. We encourage them!
  - iii. We allow ourselves to be refined and even corrected through them!
  - iv. Joan Harmon—never stopped smiling!
- b. Others refuse to smile until they finally have nothing to complain about.
  - i. *"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..." (Philippians 2:14–16, NIV84)*
- c. The TKGE results in complaining (sin).

- i. The TOL results in rejoicing!
- ii. Repentance is glorious as it causes us to immediately start feeding off of the Tree of Life.
- iii. Francis Frangipane—An offense can strike at our virtues or sins, our values or our pride. It can penetrate and wound any dimension of the soul, both good and evil. I once brought a series of messages about gossip. Most people saw their sin and repented, but a core group of gossips were greatly offended and ultimately left the church. When the Holy Spirit exposes sin in someone's soul, if they refuse God's transforming grace, they often become offended at the person who brought the teaching. We need to become a people who say, "Lord, show us what needs to change in me." I'm talking about growing up. A wise man will receive a rebuke and he will prosper. But a fool despises rebuke.

#### IV. Opportunities for Offense

- a. When we're not recognized for our good works and ministry.
  - i. We must trust the authority and wisdom of our leaders.
  - ii. *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."* (Hebrews 13:17, ESV)
- b. False Expectations
  - i. This is when we expect people to fulfill our lives rather than God.
    - 1. We look to man to validate us, encourage us, love us and speak well of us.
    - 2. When this doesn't happen, when we look to people to do what they really aren't designed to do, our false expectations lead to offense.
    - 3. We want people to jump through our hoops! Stop it!!
  - ii. Francis Frangipane- The very power of our expectations can choke out the sweetness of a personal relationship. Suppose that, instead of burdening people with our expectations, we simply learned to appreciate them for themselves - no strings attached. The fact is, our loved ones are not under any obligation to fulfill our expectations. If they do fulfill them, it is their free choice, not our demands, that makes for a loving relationship.
  - iii. Training moment: Always tip your server based on your love for them, not their service to you.
- c. God's Offense
  - i. Before God will elevate someone, he will often give them an opportunity to be offended.
    - 1. Our pride and false expectations must die.
    - 2. The Holy Spirit moves most freely when we lose our dignity!

3. God will rebuke and challenge and put people in unfair situations to see how they will respond.
4. Dreams must die, we must lower ourselves.
- ii. *"But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' And he answered, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed instantly." (Matthew 15:25–28, ESV)*
  1. He called her a dog! He was testing her pride and she responded in humility.
- d. Unfair Treatment
  - i. You can be right but dead.
  - ii. Go low and base your response on TRUTH, not FACTS.
  - iii. Bless those who curse you.
  - iv. Turn the other cheek and allow someone to react unfairly again, all while you love and forgive and bless.