

Don't Take the Bait
The Bait of Being Easily Offended
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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Ephesians 4:21-27 (NLT)

21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. 25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

Matthew 18:15 (NLT)

15 "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 8 "e no relief.

Proverbs 12:1 (NLT)

1 To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction.

Proverbs 12:15 (NLT)

15 Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.

Proverbs 19:11 (NLT)

11 Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Do you enjoy fishing? What's the most fun you've ever had fishing? What's the biggest fish you've ever caught? (No exaggerating please).

Start **thinking**. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- **Read Ephesians 4:21-27.** Troy compared fishing to Satan's schemes to gain a foothold in our lives. How are they similar?
- How does being offended and withholding forgiveness become a stronghold?
- **Read Matthew 18:15.** According to Jesus, how should we respond when someone sins against us or simply offends us with their words or actions?

Start **sharing**. Choose a question to create openness.

- Do you know someone who holds on to a past offense that is impacting their relationships in the present? What is it like to be around them? Have you been that person?
- Troy said we should talk to each other instead of about each other. Have you been in a family, work environment or church where the opposite occurs? What is the result?
- **Read Proverbs 12:1 and 12:15.** How do the wise respond to a rebuke? How do you normally respond when someone corrects you? How do we receive it with humility?
- **Read Proverbs 19:11.** This passage teaches to overlook an offense and Matthew 18 teaches us to confront it. How do you know which is the appropriate response?
- Describe a time you chose to overlook an offense. How did that impact the relationship?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- This week, identify one area of your life where you're holding onto offense or bitterness and ask God to help you let it go.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Dear heavenly father, thank you for your forgiveness. Please help us to forgive others. Please give us the discernment to know when to confront sin and when to overlook offense. And please help us to receive rebuke with grace and conviction, in Jesus' holy name.
-Amen

Start **digging**. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "How and when should we overlook an offense (Proverbs 19:11)?"

Answer: Proverbs 19:11 teaches, "A person's wisdom yields patience; / it is to one's glory to overlook an offense." To "overlook" an offense is to take no notice of wrongs done against oneself, to refuse to retaliate or seek revenge, to let affronts go, or, in a word, to forgive.

First, we can observe that the first half of the proverb focuses on self-control. The ESV puts it this way: "Good sense makes one slow to anger." The NLT says, "Sensible people control their temper." Patience, being slow to anger, and self-control are good virtues to possess. Patience and self-control are listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23), an essential part of the Christian's lifestyle. Our responses are to be reasonable and measured. We should increasingly grow in our ability to control ourselves when angry and overlook offenses when we can.

Second, we know that anger itself is not wrong but rather how we express it. James 1:19–20 states, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." Offenses do come, and there are times when anger is called for, but anger should not be our first response in any given situation. Our goal is to control our expression of anger and, when possible, overlook an offense.

Third, the Bible calls us to not be easily angered. God Himself is "slow to anger" (Nahum 1:3), and we should be, too. A "slow fuse" is the product of wisdom and love. First Corinthians 13:5 says that love "is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." To aid us in developing this type of self-control, we can also carefully choose our friends: "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, / do not associate with one easily angered" (Proverbs 22:24). Those who are easily angered show a lack of self-control.

Fourth, God considers it a "glory" to overlook an offense. In other words, overlooking a wrong done to oneself is a sign of maturity and grace. Forgiving others is worthy of respect. It is a triumph for us to forgive and to take no notice of injuries and offenses. Jesus taught, "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them" (Luke 17:3–4). Of course, God has forgiven our sins, for Christ's sake; for us to forgive others, for Christ's sake, is a glorious thing.

Other proverbs also express this theme. Proverbs 17:9 notes, "Whoever would foster love covers over an offense." Proverbs 10:12 says, "Love covers over all wrongs." We also see this virtue lived out in David's story. He refused to retaliate against King Saul, although the king was trying to kill him (see 1 Samuel 24:5–7). And David chose to overlook the curses (and other things) that Shimei hurled at him (2 Samuel 16:5–14).

"A person's wisdom yields patience; / it is to one's glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). Stating this verse conversely provides this paraphrase: "A person's folly yields impatience; / it is to one's shame to refuse to forgive." Forgiveness is graceful; revenge is disgraceful.

Overlooking an offense does not negate justice. It doesn't mean we turn a blind eye to sin or pretend that evil doesn't exist. It means we are willing to forgive, especially when the offense is directed toward us. It means we refuse to hold grudges. There are many trifling things that could bother us, but by the grace of God we let them slide. There are other, not-so-trifling things that could harm us, but by the grace of God we determine to forgive. And there are situations that require a quick, decisive response, but by the grace of God we are slow to anger even as we stop the wrongdoing.

How is this overlooking of an offense accomplished? From a human standpoint, it is impossible. But God's Spirit at work in the life of a believer offers the power to forgive any wrong. Jesus taught us to pray like this: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). We forgive because we have been forgiven, knowing that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). In wisdom we know what requires a response and what does not. In patience we turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). In love we choose to overlook the insults, slurs, and slights that come our way.