

Who, **What**, Where, When, How and Why questions

What are we **freed from** that is so dangerous, divisive and debilitating?

Freedom from wrath (loss of protection and insulation from harm and degradation)

Antidote: Reconciliation and peace

Freedom from fear (expectation of severe punishment in the name of judgment)

Antidote: Perfect, unconditional and unshakeable love that never lets go

Freedom from shame (loss of connection to life and intimacy and all that is inherent in that)

Antidote: Restored joy and boldness and confidence and awareness of personal worth

Freedom from offense (believing someone owes us for something they did to cause us hurt or loss)

Antidote: Releasing belief in the system of debt collecting and hierarchy altogether

Freedom from condemnation (the false assumption that God threatens punishments for offending Him)

Antidote: Truth that God is not a destroyer or manipulator but relentlessly invites intimacy

Freedom from lies (cause of despair, depression, hopelessness, meaninglessness, loneliness, confusion)

Antidote: Truth as it is in Jesus – truth about God's disposition, reality, and our real identity

Freedom from sin (the inevitable fruit of distrust, unbelief, shame, fear and false views of reality)

Antidote: Death to the power of sin to define my identity by trust in my true identity in Christ

*The lot settles disputes, and keeps strong ones apart. **A brother offended is more difficult than a fortified city**; and disputes are like the bars of a castle.* (Proverbs 18:18-19)

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

*Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? Aren't all of his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all of these things?" **They were offended by him**. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not **without honor**, except in his own country, and in his own house."*

*He didn't do many mighty works there **because of their unbelief**.* (Matthew 13:55-58)

He summoned the multitude, and said to them, "Hear, and understand. That which enters into the mouth doesn't defile the man; but that which proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

*Then the disciples came, and said to him, "Do you know that **the Pharisees were offended**, when they heard this saying?"*

*But he answered, "Every plant which **my heavenly Father didn't plant** will be uprooted. Leave them alone. **They are blind guides of the blind**. If the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit."*

(Matthew 15:10-14)

Notice in these passages the things that are **closely linked** with the **spirit of offense**. So far we find **disputes, unbelief, spiritual blindness** and a reminder that none of this is from our heavenly Father.

*Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of me tonight, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' However, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." But Peter said to him, "Although all will be offended, yet I will not." Jesus said to him, "Most certainly I tell you, that you today, even **this night**, before the rooster crows twice, **you will deny me** three times." But **he spoke all the more**, "If I must die with you, **I will not deny you**." **They all said the same thing.** (Mark 14:27-31)*

*Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John the **things which you have seen and heard**: that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. **Blessed is he who is not offended by me.**" (Luke 7:22-23)*

Notice the close associations of words in these passages that help us understand the nature of offenses.

Unbelief is a **root** of offense.

To **stumble** can be the **same** as being **offended**.

Offense can **result in denial** of Jesus.

To **avoid being offended**, or letting go of offense, will result in **blessing**.