PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

Materials:
- Mousetrap
- Scripture PPTs
- Stones to give away and a basket to pass them around

WORKSHOP: AN UNOFFENDABLE HEART

by Victoria Robinson

LEADER'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: Offenses are inevitable, but being offended is a choice. Allowing bitterness to remain in a heart will bring devastating spiritual consequences. A wise woman will look at offense as an opportunity to become more Christ-like.

CONTEXT: This training is appropriate for any PWOC audience.

TIME: 50 minutes

HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE: (5 minutes)

As you welcome the group, cautiously and carefully, have someone set off a mousetrap off to the side. Use a microphone if necessary to make the clap of the trap heard. Display an attitude of surprise as you hold up the detonated mousetrap.

> *It's great when your Hook is something unexpected. If you can capture your audience in the first minute of speaking, you will be much more likely to hold their attention for the duration. If you have more than one point, additional Hooks can be used to introduce each of your other points. It's a tool to keep reclaiming the attention and curiosity of your listeners.*

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This is a perfect introduction to today's topic: *An Unoffendable Heart*. You see this mousetrap illustrates what happens when we take up an offense.

The word offense, "...originally referred to the part of a trap to which BAIT was attached. Hence, the word describes laying a trap in someone's way. In the New Testament, it often describes an entrapment used by the enemy. Offense is a tool of the devil to bring people into captivity." ~John Bevere

The truth is: offenses are to be expected. Jesus Himself said, "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:7; NKJV)

Luke 17:1 states it this way, "It is impossible that no offenses should come."

"People will offend us either by what they do, or by what they do not do. Either way, life offers us *daily opportunities* to be offended." ~Mark Batterson

"Our response to an offense determines our future." ~John Bevere

So, the question to address today: What will we do with the offenses that come our way?

MAKE YOUR POINT 1: TAKING UP OFFENSES (15 minutes)

Invite a few responses to the question: How would you describe or define being offended?

> *As individuals offer their ideas, repeat what they say back to them (and the group) using their own words. This repetition shows that their version has value and does not need to be edited by you. It also provides a second chance for everyone to hear and process what was said.*

BOTTOM LINE: "Being offended is to get so upset with someone that you hold a grudge against them or retaliate actively or passively." ~Frank Viola

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 1: **Let's look deeper into what Scripture teaches about offense. In a small group of no more than 3 people, read the following scriptures and record what you discover about taking up an offense.**

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Allow 10 minutes for this discussion to include a report of the discovery.

> *If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God. (Psalm 55:12-14; NIV)*

Discovery: The closer the relationship the more severe the offense.

> *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26; ESV)*

Discovery: In this world we will get hurt! People will hurt, disappoint and even betray us. It is important that we respond and reflect instead of reacting to a hurt.

> *A man's wisdom gives him patience. It is his GLORY to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11; NIV)*

Discovery: Christians can have victory over being offended! We can choose to have an unoffendable heart.

MAKE YOUR POINT 2: OFFENSES AS STUMBLING BLOCKS (20 minutes)

It is said that people don't stumble over boulders; they stumble over stones. Those "…relatively small things; the personality of someone in authority bothers us and soon we are offended; a friend or family member fails to meet our expectations and we take an offense into our soul." ~Francis Frangipane

How can offenses become a stumbling block to our walk with Christ?

What are the results of taking up an offense? *List the responses on the whiteboard.*

Really get your group thinking. Ask challenging questions. Let them be uncomfortable for a few minutes while their minds grapple with the questions. Maybe ask a question like, "Does it really matter if I'm mad at someone if I never talk to anybody about it?" or "What happens when I'm offended at someone and then I have a conversation with someone else about it?" Build on whatever the ladies offer and take them a step further into those "gray areas" that we tolerate like "venting." Questions like these involve higher levels of thinking and can make a conversation like this one life-altering.

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Consider including the responses below if they are not listed:

- Relationships may be damaged or severed (friends, family, church members)
- Anger and bitterness take root
- Offended people often look for people to take their side and compound the problem
- Offended people have their eyes on self, not on God or others
- Taking up an offense reveals lack of spiritual maturity

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 2: **In your same small group discuss the following questions. Record your insight so you can report to the larger group.**

> *If you've noticed any body language indicating that an individual is struggling with this topic, now might be a good time to visit their group. Ask them what they think. Be an ear and a sounding board. Even brief encounters of this nature can have a profound impact on an individual who is feeling vulnerable.*

1) Read the following Scriptures and discuss what they have to do with picking up an offense:

- Proverbs 17:9 (NIV): *He who covers an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*
  Inherent truth: The enemy uses gossip to destroy relationships.

- Ephesians 4:26 (NIV): *In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*
  Inherent truth: I have a choice in allowing bitterness to take root and nurturing an offense in my heart.

2) What is the difference between being hurt and taking up an offense?

Invite the groups to summarize their discussion and share their insight.

Coordinate with someone who has a flair for the dramatic to speak the quote lines "in character" (provide script). After the "actor" speaks the line, ask the group to pick the proper ***Truth*** *from the list on the handout or PPT slide. Have someone ready to read the corresponding scripture.*

1) "If someone close to me is upset, I must be upset, too." (Truth: B)

2) "If someone doesn't like me, this is terrible and I must be offended." (Truth: A)

3) "If someone hurts me, I must become offended or upset." (Truth: C)

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Truth A: The truth is that not everyone will like you but you can choose to live at peace. (Romans 12:9-21)

Truth B: The truth is another person's offense is not mine! I can choose to not take up the offense. (Hebrews 12:15)

Truth C: The truth is I can choose a godly response no matter what. (John 8:4)

Which truth holds the most meaning for you? Why? Share your answer with a partner.

APPLY IT TO LIFE: (10 minutes)

1 Peter 2:22-23 provides the model for an unoffendable heart. Let's read it together:

> *He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. (NIV)*

Instruct the group to read silently and prayerfully the following section: "The Process of Laying Down Offenses" and the quote by Francis Frangipane. Pass around a basket and instruct the group to remove a stone from the basket.

The Process of Laying Down Offenses

Psalm119:165 (NAS) holds the promise, *Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.* The KJV translates this: "nothing offends them."

If you are holding on to an offense, here are the necessary steps to take to lay it down.

- Recognize you are hurt- "I'm fine" will not help the process (Psalm 139)
- Pray and perhaps even fast (Isaiah 58:6)
- Speak, write, and even sing your willingness to forgive
- Search the Scriptures for examples of those who forgave others
    - Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 50:19-21)
    - Father of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31)
    - Jesus on the Cross (Luke 23:34)
- Bless the Offender (Matthew 5:44; Psalm 35:11-14)

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- Pray for Reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-20)

> *"We pray, 'Lord, I want to change.' To answer our prayer, He sometimes puts us in situations that perfectly offend us. The offense itself awakens our need for grace. Thus, the Lord precipitates change by first offending the area of our soul He desires to transform. He does not expect us to merely survive this adversity, but to become Christ-like in it. Ask Joseph in the Old Testament: the 'land of offense' became the land of his anointing and power. Listen, my friends: the destiny of man unfolds or dies at the junction of offense. How we handle offense is the key to our tomorrow." ~Francis Frangipane*

When it looks like everyone has finished reading the section above, instruct the women to hold their stone as they repeat the prayer below together:

> *My dear Savior and Lord, forgive me for being easily offended and for carrying offenses. Right now, I choose to lay them down at the foot of the Cross. I say with Christ, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."*
>
> *Grant me the new creation heart that can walk as Jesus walked through a world of offenses without stumbling. I want to see everything as an opportunity to pray, everything as an opportunity to become like Christ. Lord, help me to interpret offenses as opportunities that lead to transformations.*
>
> *Grant me, O Lord Jesus, the pulse and beat of YOUR Unoffendable Heart. In Christ's Holy Name, AMEN.*

Keep your stone in a place that reminds you to beware of the stumbling blocks. May the words of Acts 24:16 be true of each one: "And herein do I exercise myself to always have a conscience that is void of offense toward God and toward man." (KJV)

***For further study on the topic:**

The Bait of Satan by John Bevere

The Three Battlegrounds by Francis Frangipane

The Freedom of Forgiveness by John MacArthur

When You Can't Say "I Forgive You" by Grace Ketterman, MD and David Hazard

When Forgiveness Doesn't Make Sense by Robert Jefress

Total Forgiveness by R.T. Kendall

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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: Offenses are inevitable, but being offended is a choice. Allowing bitterness to remain in a heart will bring devastating spiritual consequences. A wise woman will look at offense as an opportunity to become more Christ-like.

INTRO: The word offense, "…originally referred to the part of a trap to which BAIT was attached. Hence, the word describes laying a trap in someone's way. In the New Testament, it often describes an entrapment used by the enemy.

- Offense is a tool of the devil to bring people into captivity." ~John Bevere
- Jesus Himself said, "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:7; NKJV)
- Luke 17:1 states, "It is impossible that no offenses should come."
- "People will offend us either by what they do, or by what they do not do. Either way, life offers us *daily opportunities* to be offended." ~Mark Batterson
- "Our response to an offense determines our future." ~John Bevere
- "Being offended is to get so upset with someone that you hold a grudge against them or retaliate actively or passively." ~Frank Viola

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I. TAKING UP OFFENSES

How would you describe or define being offended?

ACTIVITY: In a small group of no more than 3 people, read the following scriptures and record what you discover about taking up an offense.

> *If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God. (Psalm 55:12-14; NIV)*

> *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26; ESV)*

> *A man's wisdom gives him patience. It is his GLORY to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11; NIV)*

II. OFFENSES AS STUMBLING BLOCKS

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2) What is the difference between being hurt and taking up an offense?

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Three truths to consider:

Truth A: The truth is that not everyone will like you but you can choose to live at peace. (Romans 12:9-21)

Truth B: The truth is another person's offense is not mine! I can choose to not take up the offense. (Hebrews 12:15)

Truth C: The truth is I can choose a godly response no matter what. (John 8:4)

Which truth holds the most meaning for you? Why? Share your answer with a partner.

APPLY IT TO LIFE:

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> *He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. (NIV)*

THE PROCESS OF LAYING DOWN OFFENSES:

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- Pray and perhaps even fast (Isaiah 58:6)
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Read the following prayer:

My dear Savior and Lord, forgive me for being easily offended and for carrying offenses. Right now, I choose to lay them down at the foot of the Cross. I say with Christ, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Grant me the new creation heart that can walk as Jesus walked through a world of offenses without stumbling. I want to see everything as an opportunity to pray, everything as an opportunity to become like Christ. Lord, help me to interpret offenses as opportunities that lead to transformations.

Grant me, O Lord Jesus, the pulse and beat of YOUR Unoffendable Heart.

In Christ's Holy Name, AMEN

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