

Satan's Bait – Offense as a Christian's Downfall

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MAIN VERSES

[Mark 4:16](#) • [Luke 17:1](#) • [2 Timothy 2:24](#) • [Psalm 55:12-14](#) • [Matthew 18](#) • [Matthew 5](#) • [Romans 12:9](#) • [Philippians 3:20](#) • [John 20:23](#) • [Psalm 1:1](#) • [Psalm 119:165](#) • [2 Corinthians 13:11](#) • [Romans 12:18](#) • [Philippians 1:9](#)

Welcome to Founded in Truth

Son of God, welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home. Yeah, we got a little bit of an echo, don't we? Well, Shabbat Shalom to everybody.

I wasn't here last week, but I got to see Pete's message. How was Pete's message? Real good. I'm super excited. We've spoken a while about doing a series on Revelation. For some reason, last year, I just didn't think it was appropriate. Many people did. I didn't feel like it was appropriate to tackle that topic with so many different distractions going on.

But before we jump into the Revelation series, I thought it'd be good. I spoke with Pete about this, and Jason, that maybe we should kind of do a preliminary series because many of us have grown up with a certain view of Revelation. I wanted to do a series and just kind of get back to the foundations of what Yeshua taught and what his ministry—what are the recognizable tenets of the ministry of Yeshua? What are the recognizable teachings that he gives to his disciples, the things that we ought to be living out?

The reason for this is very simple: when we jump into apocalyptic literature, there's lots of fireworks and lots of really cool imagery and lots of violent imagery that's not always literal. It's meant to be portrayed a certain way. So I want us to be grounded in who Yeshua is before we jump into all of the cool, explosive stuff that John has in his visions and that he records for us.

Pete kind of kicked us off in that series last week, and I'm so thankful, Pete, for bringing the word. This week, I'm going to kind of pick up where Pete left off and keep going.

Satan's Bait and the Hook

We're going to talk about Satan's bait. Satan's bait and the bait of offense—the worm on the hook, the worm on the hook that just seems irresistible at times to latch onto. And what happens when we latch onto it? What happens when the hook snares? What happens when now we're stuck and we go wherever the person holding the fishing pole draws us in?

It's a bit of a nerve-wracking message because it's one that I not only feel applies to everybody, but definitely applies to me. I think everybody has the tendency to want to snatch hold to the bait.

But before we jump in, because it's such a serious issue, and if you're anything like me, if you're going to walk into a message like that, you might get defensive. So let's watch a kind of humoristic video to lighten things up before we jump into the jaws of God's Word. Amen?

The Parenting Styles Video

The breast police have arrived. 100% breastfed, straight from the source. Drug-free pool birth. Dolphin assisted. Well, you push, we cuddle. Yeah, cuddling is bonding. Helicopter mom, 12 o'clock. Must be mommy's day off. Oh, that's sexist. What? Oh, disposable diaper. Well, apparently we don't care about the environment. Oh, look, it's crunchy granola mom. I wonder what it's like being a part-time mom. Ooh. Stay at home, moms. I wonder what they do all day. Manny Pettys. Looks like some moms are too lazy to breastfeed. Oh, yeah? Well, I pop during conference calls. Hello. You want a piece of this? Oh, a piece of this? Well, I'll show you some screen free.

Creating Sides and Building Offense

That was a video that I wasn't sure I was going to play, but it so perfectly displays something that I think we can all relate to. Sometimes we like to emphasize our differences. And then we like to think that our differences are what actually identifies us or gives us identity. So everyone who has a different viewpoint is automatically an adversary now. They're on another side of the court, on the opposing team, which means that if we have different sides and they're opposing, then there's going to be a winner and a loser.

And I don't want to be a loser, so therefore I need to be a winner. So I need to size them up and size their views up so my views are better. So I can feel more secure in the views that are based on my own life experiences and are unique to me anyway.

But sometimes we forget about the baby. Sometimes we forget about the thing that is actually what we have in common—we're all trying to walk through this life trying to figure it out from the beginning.

I got a DM on Instagram a few weeks ago, maybe a month, month and a half ago, from a friend of mine. And it was a meme about vaccines. They sent me a message and I thought it was hilarious because it was a joke. But the wording that they used really caught me off guard. They didn't mean it this way, but it's just the language that we've come to use. And I think that for me, that has a subconscious effect.

They said, "Hey, I know we're on different sides of this issue. But this is funny." And it was a hilarious meme—not about that. But the language used caught me because I had never considered myself on a different side than anyone about that topic. I have a different viewpoint than some people might about a lot of different things. And that's when I started to psychoanalyze: what am I doing? Am I reading into this the wrong way?

The Definition of Sides

So I just looked it up. Maybe this is splitting hairs, but I want to put this slide up. So whenever we talk about being on a different side of an issue or an opinion, from the dictionary, this is usually what we say: we support or oppose in a conflict, dispute, or debate. So there is another side, right?

But if we have a different point of view, it's a particular attitude or way of considering a matter. See, when I hear "side," and I can't help but think maybe we all do this on a subconscious level—I think of war, because wars have different sides. I think of a basketball game, because basketball has different sides. And that's all fine and dandy except the objective of having a certain side is to win, is to be the only side.

The Matter of Conviction and Disagreement

And don't get me wrong. When it comes to things like theology, who our king is, and what he's done for us to unite us on the same side, there's no viewpoint that's different than that. But with everything else, sometimes I wonder if we take our viewpoints and make them into a side and then end up acting as if our side is the only one and we need to go to war and anything is worth the sacrifice.

Did God make us robots?

A couple people are hesitant. It's a trap. He's going to tell it.

Are we robots? Do you think that in his divine will, God foresaw the person sitting next to you might not have the same life experiences that you have had and therefore is going to have a different point of view on a lot of different topics? Is that okay?

For the most part. This video is awesome because it details what happens when we expect everyone else to have a point of view that is exactly like ours.

The Narrative We Paint

We feel comfort in being part of a group. And when someone has a different viewpoint, sometimes we label them. We paint a narrative about them that excludes them from our group, our side. Then we try to find others that have the same viewpoints because we want to feel included in this new identity that we have just created for ourselves based on someone else having a different opinion about a topic. Ours is better, of course, whatever it would be.

And because you have a different point of view, I get offended. The bait hangs. And then because I am offended by you having a different point of view, I begin to create a narrative about your ability to be a human being. Am I the only one that's ever done that?

You are the image of God until I found out you disagree—or no, not even disagree. You see something different than me. We will take that paintbrush and repaint you as something else. Because obviously if you have a different viewpoint on breastfeeding, you don't love your baby. Was that too real? Okay, that was too real-life of an example. Okay, sorry.

The Fermentation of Offense

And then because you have created an offense within yourself, it begins to putrefy within your heart. It begins to stink after a while. It begins to ferment and it needs to go somewhere. So you begin the process of purging those gases. You chit-chat, you chit-chat, you start chit-chatting. Start chit-chatting to others about your viewpoint and more specifically, how other people's viewpoints on breastfeeding are wrong and they're wrong. And it becomes a breeding ground for a sacrificial altar to be created that you would gladly lay down the relationships you have with other people on.

All the while, not even realizing that you're all on the same side of wanting to take care of your dang kids.

Choosing Common Ground

Instead of fabricating sides in your relationship that are opposing, why not make the effort and dare? Why not embrace the sides that you find yourself standing on together?

All right, sometimes you can't do that. Okay, well, let's not go to the very edge and extreme fringe examples of where you can't do that and try to focus on the majority where we don't and we choose not to.

And see, the thing is, in a world under the oppressive powers of darkness and the leadership of Satan himself, this type of attitude is to be expected.

but not in the community of God. But offense tastes so good. What's that line from—oh man, Jennifer Grey with the AK-47? Red Dawn. That was a leap off the edge. Red Dawn, the original, not the recent one. There's a character in the movie, a pilot talking to someone. He says, "Dude, you gotta do something about this bitterness and hate that you have in your heart for the enemy." And I remember—"It keeps me warm at night. It keeps me warm." We fall in love with it after a while. It tastes so good to size other people up based on their opinions about stuff. And then we love sizing up others because it makes us feel like a fighter, right? We feel like a warrior for our viewpoint. And the way we have surgically sized up someone else based on their opinions and viewpoints, we size ourselves up in light of that to be even bigger and better. They are the losers and we are the winners because our opinion is better. Does that sound familiar?

The Trap of Offense

Before we go any further, I want to get to two great resources about offense and how to deal with it. Number one is a good friend of mine, someone I reference a lot. He's an amazing teacher and pastor over at Bates Shalom Messianic Fellow Congregation in Monroe, Louisiana. He has a great message on offense called "The Offended Kingdom." And then there is a fantastic book that I would charge you as homework to read. It's by John Bevere and it's called "The Bait of Satan." He must have taken the name from this message to put on his book. I dare you to read that book. It's a short book. You can get it on Audible. I don't dare you—I would like to see everybody read that book. Highly recommend it. The link is in the description of the live stream.

One of the most deadly and deceptive traps that imprisons countless believers, severs relationships, and destroys communities is the trap of offense. We experience rejection from

others, and sometimes we create rejection from others, and we refuse to forgive. We choose to internalize confrontation, allowing it to grow and fester.

Wounded by Those Closest to Us

Most often, when we get offended—deeply wounded, offended—it's by those closest to us. Ever realize that? Like, if it's a stranger that calls you a name in rush hour traffic, whatever that name would be, it's typically dismissible, right? You typically respond by saying, "God bless you, and I'll pray for you," and you forget about it. Or you don't respond appropriately and you forget about it. It typically doesn't cause a deep wound. But someone in your own community calling you a name publicly or on social media? That wound gets deeper.

David laments this fact in [Psalm 55](#). It's amazing because we think of the old ancient world as this place so far removed from us, but the fact of the matter is they just don't have cell phones and we do. That's like the only difference. They lament about the same things they see in their lives. They still have the same crushing darkness and anxiety at times, and they still laugh at the same kind of jokes. It's just like—the closer the relationship, typically the deeper the offense. Only the people you care about most can hurt you. Only the people that you truly care about most are the ones that can cause you pain.

The Skandalon: Understanding Offense

Anybody ever been hurt? Anybody ever been hurt by someone in their family? Anybody ever been hurt by someone in their church? [Luke 17:1](#)—Yeshua says this little bit of wisdom to his followers and his disciples. And here's what he says: "He said to his disciples, offenses will certainly come, but woe to the one they come through." Yeshua straight up tells his followers, you will not live in a world without offense. It will come. How are you going to deal with it?

The Greek word here for offense is skandalon. That's actually where we get the word "scandal." I just learned that a little while ago. Thank you, Josh. And it means to stumble around, like to sin, but also it literally means trap. From what I was reading, it's like the bait of the trap, like a little trap to catch small animals—you have the actual thing that catches them, the hook with the bait—skandalon. That's the word there. Offenses will certainly be in your life.

In [2 Timothy 2:24](#), Paul uses this word to describe the entrapment of the devil. And the Lord's servant, right? So listen up. Everybody listening? Kid, me too. "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but must be kind to everyone. Able to teach, not resentful." What Paul is saying here is black and white: those who are in quarrels or in zealous opposition with others

are indicative of having fallen into the trap set by the devil himself. And when someone finds themselves so full of offense, so full of bitterness, so full of—

Two Categories of the Offended

In the book "The Bait of Satan" by John Bevere, he mentions something that I found very interesting. He says that all offended people typically fall into two major categories. And if you're here today or you're watching online and you have some type of bitterness or unresolved offense in your heart towards another, or an unforgiveness that has been dwelling in you, you fall into one of these categories.

The first category is those people who have been treated unjustly. That's category one. You have been treated unjustly. The second category is those who believe they have been treated unjustly. From experience, I can tell you that people who fall into the second category typically believe with all their hearts that they have been wronged. Most of the time, their conclusions are drawn through inaccurate data or information—information they've received to latch onto this offense or to have this unresolved bitterness or unforgiveness. Maybe the information is absolutely accurate, but their conclusions of the matter are distorted because of the hurt they feel inside.

When We Hide the Offense

Anybody ever been hurt by someone? And so you respond in a way that is totally outside of the scope that they ever had when they hurt you. We begin to repaint a scenario against someone else so that we can justify the measure of pain that we feel. That's the human condition. When we feel hurt, offense has the opportunity to take place. And whether or not the information we have about the circumstances is accurate, we tend to have a distorted conclusion to justify our bitterness as a result of the pain we feel.

Tell me if this scenario sounds familiar. You get offended. But instead of going to the person and talking to them about it, instead of reaching out and bringing it to the surface, instead of facing the elephant in the room, you hide it. Why would you ever do that? You hide the offense and you keep it under cloak. And the result is what? It just goes away by itself, right? It never goes away. We've all walked down this path before. It never goes away. In fact, it creates a home in your heart and it redefines all future relationships moving forward—maybe a little, maybe a lot. And it consumes your heart with bitterness towards that person.

Anybody ever had that experience? Like, "I'm not mad at this person because of X, Y, Z, you know?" Like, "Well, yeah, but I thought they really hurt you." "Yeah, but I'm not mad about it."

"No, no. Okay, well, if they really hurt you, you can go and talk to them about it." "I said I'm not mad about it. Leave me alone. It's not that big of a deal. I would never do that."

Pride: The Keeper of Offense

One way the devil keeps a person in a constant state of offensiveness or an offended state is to keep the offense hidden, cloaked with something we call pride. Pride—a shape-shifting little thing in our lives. Pride keeps us from really admitting to ourselves how much and why we feel the way that we do. Pride is such an amazing little thing because it keeps us from dealing with the truth. It tends to distort the way we see things and it blinds us from the opportunity to grow and mature. Pride tells us that everything is fine even though our heart is hurting. And as a result, pride hardens the heart, just as [2 Timothy 2](#) says. It entraps us.

Pride causes us to feel like a victim when a confrontation or offense occurs. I am justified in my behavior and in how I will respond to it because you believe you are completely innocent and falsely accused. And as a result, you end up holding back the F word: forgiveness.

The Command to Forgive

Now, what's wrong with holding on to forgiveness? Well, as a Christian, you do not have permission to hold on to offenses and hold back forgiveness. In God's kingdom, two wrongs don't make a right. You hurt me, I will hurt you gladly. God, that is just the greatest temptation when we are hurt.

Man, you guys know the Lord's Prayer? We said the Lord's Prayer? Do you guys know the very next verse right after the Lord's Prayer? Well, I love the Lord's Prayer. Memorize it. The very next verse. You want to see why most people don't go as far as to say this verse? Let's go ahead and put it up. So we're going to read the last part of the Lord's Prayer and then verse 14.

Jesus help us. Jesus gives this example to us, and it's the cruciform example. It's the idea, I guess theologically, that the picture and the image of everything that took place on the cross is the example that Christians are supposed to live out in their daily lives. And I love that because it's so challenging. One of those things is when Yeshua is there with nails, steel iron through his hands and his feet, and he's naked in front of everybody, and he's been whipped, and he's bleeding. His hair's pulled out, and people are spitting on him and laughing at him, probably mocking anyone who was around that knew him or his family.

Hey, you can't do anything. Look at him. And he looks at them, and he looks up, and he says, God, I will not leave an example that is indicative of harboring any type of offense for the worst possible sin against me. Father, forgive them. This is the example I'm gonna leave. Father, forgive them. They don't even have a clue what they're doing.

Father, Forgive Them

Imagine if we saw the world like Yeshua saw the world. Imagine if we saw people like Yeshua saw people. No, not dumb little sheep, stop it. We get tempted. What if we saw Yeshua as people who are broken people in search of the arms of the Father, wandering around in darkness, just trying to find love and mercy and grace and forgiveness themselves? What if we saw other people that while wandering around in the darkness hurt other people because they themselves are hurt? And what if we saw other people and we said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. What if we were humble enough to say, will you forgive me? Because I don't know what I'm doing.

Guys, in 2020 and 2021, we have entered into Satan's playground for believers. So many distractions, so many lures to bait us into allowing our attention and devotion to each other and the kingdom of God to be focused on temporal things of the world. The elections for one. We love to violently rip someone in half, tearing people apart in the name of our all-knowing intellectual understanding of the ins and outs of our political system and our opinion of it. And we're going to talk about that every four years in this country.

Citizens of Another Kingdom

Let me clarify. This secular, worldly empire in which I am very blessed to live, do not get me wrong. But one thing I feel like we have been incorrectly taught in the South within, probably just within evangelical circles from my upbringing, and I think it's very incorrect. Sometimes we're incorrectly taught that the United States of America is synonymous with the kingdom of God. And I have news for you. I have news for you. Worldly kingdoms are collectively part of the beast system in the book of Daniel and Revelation. Somewhere on that statue of Nebuchadnezzar, the United States of America exists. It's a little pebble somewhere hidden amongst all the other big ones. And you know what happens to that statue? A big old rock flies out of the sky called the kingdom of God and crushes every single one of them. This is where we live. Very blessed to live in this country, in this nation, and very blessed for the opportunity to be able to help manipulate how it evolves as believers of the kingdom of God. But it is not synonymous with the kingdom of God.

This is why we are told that we are reborn as citizens of another kingdom that is not of this earth, the kingdom of heaven. That's [Philippians 3.20](#). Citizens. As believers, we have one king we pledge our full allegiance to, and that's his throne. That being said, every four years as inhabitants of this empire, we have the opportunity to vote and choose collectively who the next Caesar will be. It is a grand opportunity. Many nations do not have such a blessing—you could call it—to be able to manipulate the system in such a way. And we humbly take this opportunity and we implement as we should. And while we do that, we live in grace and peace and love and joy for the rest of the election season with each other, right?

What Did It Cost?

No, we choose a side. And then we paint God all over our side, which then makes us soldiers of God's choice of who the president should be. And we justify looking like the rest of the world who has never tasted the grace of God. And during this time, we are so willing to lay down relationships and split communities and harbor the greatest degree of offense against covenant members with Yeshua. And after it's all said and done, after the new president has been elected, whether or not he's who you wanted to be elected, we chill out as if almost nothing happened.

Like seriously, those of us—all of us who were so jealous just a few short months ago—did not wake up this morning angry at a whole other group of people because of their political stance. We're probably at peace this morning. Some of us thought we were going to get donuts and coffee because of the announcements this morning. As if we did not call whole groups of people these horrible names on social media. As if we did not gossip about other people in our own church community behind their back. As if we did not bear God's name to justify a farce image of who we made God to be in this world.

We unfortunately had some families leave here during past elections because they could not bear the fact that other people had a different viewpoint on politics based on their unique life experiences. Couldn't bear it. Meanwhile, leadership had fun during this wonderful time that we get to navigate every four years. We got multiple messages and emails accusing us of being liberals that hate God because we were not endorsing former President Trump from the pulpit, or from the other side, conservatives that have betrayed God's kingdom for political ideals because we were not endorsing President Biden as a candidate. From the pulpit, this place is an embassy of one nation. That's it. And that is the kingdom of God.

It's such a tough time to navigate as a believer. All of us—it's kind of confusing. What do you do? What do you go do? What side do you choose? Is there a side that you can choose? It's so

easy to be overtaken with zeal that should have never taken our focus off the kingdom of God. But it's so easy to do. There's a side—I'll pick up my sword. You know, it was incredible. After a few months, it's as if nothing ever happens every four years. We've moved on. Some of us might bicker a little bit on social media if we don't like the guy who got elected. That's what happened four years ago and four years before that and four years now. I mean, it's what happens when we bicker. But it's as if nothing really happened. There really wasn't that much of an offense towards each other. We really didn't treat each other that way. But what did it cost? What did it cost?

I've Never Navigated a Pandemic

2020 also brought a pandemic. Man, what a time to be alive. I'll be honest, guys. This is my confession. I have never navigated a pandemic before. Never done it. I've never navigated a pandemic as a father. I've never navigated a pandemic as a husband. I've never navigated a pandemic as a foster parent. All kinds of—how do we, what? We got to do what now? How do we do? I've never navigated a pandemic as someone in church leadership. Clueless. Anyone else who's never really navigated something like this before? Yeah. Has it been confusing how to properly navigate some of the aspects of this? Has it ever been difficult or hard to try to work through all of the changing news and the updates and what's gonna happen now? Has it ever been scary in some aspects? And I don't mean just scary—the obvious, oh, I might get the vid and die. No, I mean other things as a part of it. Kind of nerve wracking.

Did we at any point take on offense toward another because of something having to do during the pandemic? Oh, I stumbled around in this. And I'll be honest, I know for a fact I caused others to become offended because of my choices in trying to navigate this. And I'll take this opportunity to publicly apologize to anyone that I may have set the fertile ground for offense in their life because of the decisions that I made or the things that I said or things I didn't say. But I also think that I'm not the only one. Maybe I'm going out on a limb. Has anyone else harbored offense or bitterness towards another person in this fellowship because of a viewpoint they acquired during the first pandemic they ever navigated in their life?

Masks Are a Hot Issue

Masks are a hot issue. Ooh, he said it. Masks—these little pieces of paper, I got one here—have caused so much division in the world, in the church. At Fit, we spent hours—gosh, hours. There was one big four and a half hour meeting sitting and discussing before we ever opened the logistics of how we're going to reopen. How do we do this?

And for those of you who don't know, because it's just a history from what happened last year, last March is when we stopped meeting. Seems like so long ago. And we had no idea what was going to happen. I mean, we were going to stop meeting for two weeks to help flatten the curve, right? Like, this is going to be fine. Two weeks, yeah. Y'all forgot about that, right? Yeah, it was like a real small window. Of course we'll do this. Let's join in, flatten it.

Well, what happened after two weeks? Our curve didn't flatten. Yeah. So this turned into two months or so, mainly because the venue that we were renting from told us that we can continue live streaming. They took it very seriously for their fellowship, and they told us that they didn't want large group gatherings anymore so that we could continue live streaming. So we did that for like two more months, if y'all remember, at the venue.

And then June 13th was going to be our grand reopening day. And it was like the day before the venue was going to reopen for their mass groups. So they were like, okay, it's appropriate now you can use it for that capacity. Great. Two weeks before this, the last Shabbat of the month in May, the venue came to us and they explained to us, listen, you guys can open your church back up for large group gatherings. And leadership was like, everybody was like, yay, this is great. Except we have a few rules that you need to follow if you're going to use our building. Number one, you cannot have any children's classes of any capacity.

Number two, you cannot have any youth classes of any capacity. Number three, you can only have a maximum of 40 people attend your service. Number four, everyone must wear masks. Number five, everyone must take their temperature and sign a waiver form. Oh, and you can't use the bathrooms.

We made that decision in about five seconds flat—we were not going to be reopening services here at this venue. It just wasn't going to happen. We returned our key that afternoon after being there for so long. We're grateful for the venue. It was a fantastic venue for us for so many years.

So we began to search for other venues. Some of you guys were involved with that. But what happened? Everybody was shut down. So you had these churches, and then you had this weird little group of Christians that don't eat the pig, right, wanting to use the church on Saturday. Like, we don't even know you guys, and you're already a little weird, and we're trying to protect our fellowship.

We did have a few opportunities open up, but it was like gas prices during a gas shortage—it was insane. A single month of meetings—three hours for four Saturdays—was four times the price that we're paying to rent here now. It's just, yeah, it was fun to navigate, guys. Most of you

remember going through that with us. We thankfully had someone graciously allow us to use their room and their house. These people are awesome. Thank you, guys. We live streamed for about 10 months. Until God finally opened the door last November. The door began to crack for us to have our own building here that God allowed to open, which was just such an amazing birthing from the darkness.

Leadership Responsibility

And so we had meetings—big meetings. How are we going to facilitate a group coming together, as well as be responsible as leaders that we're called to be? We felt that if anything happened, it was on us. That's the cost of being in leadership or management.

Next week, we're going to officially introduce our department heads who have taken leadership roles in the fellowship, covering different areas. That's the thing—it's part of leadership. It's on you. You take the responsibility and the accountability for whatever happens under you in the chain going down. It doesn't matter if it's your fault or not, you own it. Mike Kanan, if something's wrong with that coffee and everyone's running to the bathroom, you own it. That's how it works, right? Anyone in a teaching role or management role, in business, corporate—that's how it works.

And so we felt immense pressure to try to navigate this as best as we could. So we decided at this meeting—it was back in January, before we ever opened—that we were going to encourage everybody to use whatever precautions they would choose to use. We want to make a big deal of encouraging people to use any and all precautions, including masks. We do encourage you to wear masks. We do encourage you to take social distancing seriously. We do encourage you to wash your hands. It's nasty.

And if you have a temperature or a runny nose, we encourage you to fellowship with us online. But we also decided at that meeting that we would not mandate anything. A lot of that had to do with the state government's approach to churches—no mandates. So we never did. We never mandated masks, never required social distancing. We never required you to wash your hands when you leave the bathroom. We never told anybody who came in here with a runny nose coughing to leave.

And the reason we felt compelled to emphasize those precautions is that, in the event something happened, we could say from a liability standpoint and public view that we'd encouraged it.

But yeah, sorry, I was reminiscing. We've been here so long; it's been such a fun journey for us collectively, right?

Masks and Grace

Masks. Masks were fun because masks have already been a hot topic from the get-go. No? No? Remember the first couple of weeks coming together? You could feel the tension right here. Like they're not wearing a mask, but they are. Man, it was—I'm trying to describe the atmosphere. It was as if lines had been drawn in the sand, and there could only be one winner. And the more you start talking to people, the more sides there were. There wasn't just two, there's three, four, five. Oh man, there could only be one winner here. Anyone? No? Okay, I'm just going to keep rolling then.

A little note here: This has been something new for us to navigate because everyone has strong viewpoints about masks. But guys, I would always hope that our focus here is about Christ and Christ crucified. I'm sure we could debate this about masks—wearing them or not wearing them, which ones work, which ones don't, which ones everyone should wear—guys, I'm sure we could take these opinions and viewpoints, paint Bible verses over all of them, and justify overwhelming zeal against our own brothers and sisters.

But I would encourage you to dare to have grace—dare, I say—not just in this viewpoint, but in any viewpoint with anybody, as we're going to see what Paul says. I would ask you to dare to have grace for other people. I would ask you to dare to have grace for me. Have grace. What does that look like? How hard is that? Do we forget to do it?

Guys, I'm trying to preach on stuff that I know. And I like to think as a body of believers committed to the life-changing message of the cross and to God's forgiveness toward us, we're stronger than breaking fellowship over a piece of paper. As I look back, I wonder, is this all it would have taken? Is this our weakest link?

Vaccines and Grace

Vaccines. Matt, don't do it. Vaccines, man. I'll be honest—I'm going to share a viewpoint on vaccines today. I've always been a bit suspicious of vaccines. Growing up, when I worked at the hospital and met my good friend Jason Price, I didn't take the vaccines that were required to move freely throughout the hospital without a mask. So I had to wear a mask 12 hours a day because I didn't want to take vaccines. I didn't get the special sticker—the mark on my badge. Man, Jason, every day he'd just shake his head at me. You know Jason. It was fun, right? I've

always been a bit suspicious because I'll be honest, I'm not that bright. They got all kinds of ingredients and stuff in them that make me kind of uncomfortable. That's just me.

But guys, I'm going to say something that may upset you. People have different life experiences that produce different viewpoints, especially regarding their health. People have different life experiences that lead them to choose to take care of themselves in different ways. And I know that you've researched a lot. People that have different viewpoints have researched a lot too. And that's okay.

There is a new type of vaccine that was released to fight the vid—the mRNA vaccines. There are two. And these are different from a nerdy perspective. I mean, if you're nerdy, they're kind of neat—new in how they work, different, but still very new. And some people are rightfully hesitant to take them. Right? Other people got jabbed as soon as they could get through the door. Just give it to me. Your friend who does not want to get vaccinated is not your enemy. They are your friend. We've seen Finding Nemo. Fish are friends, okay? Non-vaxxers are friends. They have a different viewpoint.

Your friend who got vaccinated is not your enemy either. In this place, I dare to have grace. In this place, can we look at each other as recipients of God's grace and fellowship members of the body of Yeshua? Can we do that much without painting over their other identities? People are sometimes going to say things that bother you about healthcare, whatever that means to you. Sometimes people will say stupid things about healthcare that'll make you mad. And I'm prefacing my next point by asking: Can you give grace?

I've been told that I willingly take the mark of the beast by injecting synthetic insulin into myself, because pharmakia in the Bible, from this one person who sent me a lengthy message, made pharmakia synonymous with modern medicine. This was a couple years ago. Everything at the hospital is the mark of the beast. I've been told that I don't have faith in my God, that I'm not a good Christian, that I'm not loyal to the message of the cross because I take medicine for a life-threatening condition that I have. And other people as well.

I've also seen people tell others that they don't love their kids because they don't vaccinate them. I mean, why go so far? Why tell people they don't love their kids because they don't vaccinate them? I've seen people tell someone to get off chemotherapy and take frankincense oil. And they just so happen to be selling it. I've seen others tell people who prefer a more organic lifestyle that they're just dumb and need to get with the times. Gosh, we're just so quick to hurt other people because of our viewpoint.

All of these things are offensive, but not to someone who has received the grace of God in their life. And that's not necessarily a demand as much as it is a conviction, a constant conviction. Something I tell myself: Can we give grace? Can you forgive even if it hurts?

Offense, Pride, and Spiritual Wandering

See, what tends to happen in groups is when offense occurs, bitterness takes root and people are painted in contrast to your thoughts, opinions, and pain of the offense. Then as a person who feels pain in an offense, you feel isolated. You isolate yourself off and then you feel alone, like you no longer belong in this group. So what do you do? You leave. This happens a lot in relationships, especially in church settings. If you've been around a church long enough, you've seen this happen.

You feel God has called you to a church. Then you get offended and pride takes root. Then you paint the scenario that God is now calling you to leave and go find another church instead of remaining planted where God called you to begin with. Maybe God knew, and I don't know because God has all of us in different paths, but I wonder if God maybe knew that there would be an offense at your church that he led you to. Maybe God knew there would be a pain that you would endure at the church that he led you to. Maybe God orchestrated such a grand scenario where you could grow and mature as a believer in a community where God called you to be planted and dig roots in.

Path of least resistance is what we all want to take. Man, Paul fought hard for everyone to sit at the dang table, didn't he? But there are pagans. Shh, sit down. Break this bread. Shove it in your mouth. Shut up and love each other. They're now circumcised. Stop it. Why are you even worried about... Take this bread. I saw them in that idle meat market the other day. Sit down and bask in the grace that God has obviously shown to you and everyone else at this table.

Sometimes we allow pride in our own life—fertilized by offense—to occur, and we end up becoming spiritual vagabonds, hopping from one church to the next, creating a narrative that obviously the entire world is against me, and it's just me and God on the road now, heading out. Maybe God plants you where he plants you because he wants you to grow.

The Wise Man and the Settlers

There's a story that takes place when settlers were moving from the west. There was a wise man sitting at the hilltop in front of the next city out west. As the settlers came from the east, they

would come up and the wise man would be the first one they met. They would say, "Hey, wise man, what are the people like in this new town?"

He would respond, he would say, "Well, what were the people like in the town that you just left?"

Some would say, "Gosh, they were wicked people. These people were rude gossips who took advantage of innocent people. It was filled with thieves and liars and everyone was always against you."

The wise man answered, "This town is the same as the one you left."

They thanked the wise man. "Thank you so much for averting the same situation that we've had the last place we were at." And they went on their way.

Then another group of settlers arrived and asked the same question. The wise man asked them: "What was the town like where you came from?"

"It was wonderful. We had dear friends. Everyone looked out for each other's interests. There was never a lack because all cared for one another. If someone had a big project, everybody would help out, jump in. And it was a hard decision to leave these relationships. But we felt compelled to make a way for future generations by coming out to the West."

The wise man said to them exactly what he said to the other group: "The town that is before you is the same as the one that you left."

The lesson in that story is neat and powerful. How they viewed their past relationships was their scope for their future ones. The way you depart from a relationship, the way you depart from a church is the exact way that you enter your next relationship.

Breaking the Cycle Through Forgiveness

[John 20:23](#) says, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven. And if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

We preserve the sins of other people when we pick up an offense and harbor resentment. If you depart from a relationship with resentment and bitterness, you will enter the next with the same attitude. And this creates a vicious cycle, a pattern of ending and starting new relationships. Because once you begin leaving relationships with bitterness, it makes it easier to leave them again and again and again, because now you're looking for it. You're looking for that

exit sign. That's why divorcees are over 65 percent more likely to divorce again in their second marriage. It's the same thing.

In the Davidic Psalms, we have an amazing connection concerning this exact thing. In Psalm chapter one, verse one, it says this, and we're familiar. It's fascinating. This is how we start the Psalms. And in [Psalm 119:165](#), we actually get more insight on why you are blessed when you meditate on God's wisdom and his law. So meditating on God's law, the Torah, his words and wisdom produces immunity towards offense. If we're truly Torah keepers, right? What's the destiny of such a person? Well, in [Psalm 1](#), he continues in verse 3. He says this.

When a believer chooses to delight in God's word in the midst of controversy and adversity, they will avoid being offended. That person will be like a tree whose roots grow deep where the Spirit provides strength and nourishment. This will mature them to the point where adversity will, instead of becoming a catalyst of offense, become a catalyst to bear fruit—to show God's grace, love, and mercy.

The Parable of the Sower

Yeshua talks about this exact thing when speaking about the parable of the sower. Tell me if this sounds familiar. In Mark chapter 4, verse 16, it says this is what Yeshua says about some believers: "And they also likewise, which are sown on stony ground, who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness. They were so excited about it. But they have no root in themselves. And so endure before a time afterwards when affliction or persecution arises for the word's sake. Immediately they are offended."

Once you leave the place that God has chosen for you, your root system begins to dwarf. And this is not only in churches, this is relationships, this is wherever God plants you. The next time it will be easier for you to flee from adversity because you have not been careful to root yourself deeply. You end up coming to a place where you have little or no strength to endure hardship and the temptation of pride and offense. Then you become a spiritual vagabond, wandering from group to group, from relationship to relationship, suspicious and afraid that others will mistreat you, suspicious and afraid that others do not value you. You struggle to move forward, only feeding yourself on the fruit of others.

Growing Roots Through Adversity

This past year in 2020, my wife decided to garden. So we planted a few little plants. But we have trees in the backyard, see? And the trees block the sunshine from getting to the plants. I

mean, you need the light. So I said to her, "Bev, I would like to put some plants in the front yard in the neighborhood that we live in. The subdivision. This has been a long and weary conversation, but I did what every husband should. My queen, up to half my kingdom, you make this decision."

The next morning, I awaken. Beep, beep. The sound of big truck backup beepers are amidst my home. So I run to the front door, sling the door open. There is this monster pickup truck that is backing up my driveway. It's a dump truck. And it's dumping dirt or something in my front yard, my grasses. Grass no more. We now have a garden in our front yard that I'm actually really proud of. It looks really good. She's done an amazing job with it. She really has. Super excited about it. The eggplants were awesome that we planted there.

But something that we started doing earlier this year was—what are seedlings? We started doing seedlings, planting seedlings. Starting seedlings. Do you know this language, this terminology? Okay, so if you want to get a head start on planting stuff earlier, right, while it's still cold outside, you can plant a garden in your home. And you can start the plants and then transplant them, right? But when you start a garden inside your home, you need something called grow lights. Exhibit A. This was our kitchen and our grow light setup. And for some reason, whenever friends came over, they were always so suspect about what we were doing in the corner of our kitchen with all these grow lights. Right? But these are all of our tomato and celery and peppers and palm tree, whatever. Yeah. So we got all these, lots of tomatoes.

So I walk in one day and she is with her hands inside there. It looked like she's playing piano with the plants. And I'm like, "Babe, what are you doing?"

"Little sproutlets."

And she's like whipping them. She's abusing these little seedlings. Backhanded one of them. What are you doing to little Jimmy there? Tommy the tomato, it just got slapped. Ginny, what are you doing to these poor plants?

And she began telling me about the process of root strengthening. What do you mean? Stop it. What are you doing to these poor plants? Apparently, in order to entice the root system to grow deeper, to make the plant stronger so it can mature and grow adequately, you have to create an adverse environment. You kind of shake it a little bit. It mimics wind. So the roots are forced to grow down a little bit. You can do the same thing with trees. We found out you can shake little trees. That was fun. And that was so profound to me.

The plant will not have adequate roots to mature and grow unless it's faced with adversity.

Just like Yeshua said, the offenses will always be here. This is such an opportunity to grow and dig roots instead of uprooting and just dying.

Matt, what if someone did me wrong? Like I wasn't just offended by someone's viewpoint on a topic, but someone legitimately hurt me, did me wrong. I feel justified in pursuing them and nailing them to the ground because of it.

Anybody ever felt that way? Anyone ever fantasized about being like that to someone? Nail them to the ground. And that's hard. It's hard to navigate. It's hard to feel an injustice has taken place and you want, you yearn to see judgment happening. That's human nature.

They deserve to be hurt like me, right? No, right? Of course they do.

A Matter of Pride

See, pride is such a monster within us all, isn't it? We know who the ultimate judge is, right? We know this. Who's the ultimate judge? God is. Do we like that? Do we really like that? I would dare to say that sometimes we don't.

The way of the world is to shine a mirror back on trespass. You can't judge me. You can't hurt me. Look at your fruit. Look at your faults. Look how broken you are as a person. What's done to me, I need to do to them. If they bully me, I need to bully them back. If they hurt me, I need to go shout it from the rooftops. Warn everybody about how much of a monster this person is, how they hurt me.

We like to paint revenge a certain way, right? Paul says in [Romans 12, 9](#)—gosh, I do not like this verse because it convicts me as a human being. And if I'm being too transparent to you today as a human being, this is who I am. I'm constantly attempting and struggling to mature as the image bearer that God has called us all to grow into.

Here's what Paul says: Yeshua's teaching was to alleviate offense through forgiveness. At least that's the goal, right? Use the opportunity for God's grace to shine through your pain into your enemy's life. That's why [Matthew 18](#) is so important. Go to them. Give grace by pursuing a relationship with someone who has caused you deep hurt and offense. Chase them. Grace. Unity is the goal.

But Matt, the Bible says I can take eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. Yeah. If we are Christ followers, we look at the Bible through the lens of the cross. Here's what Jesus says about an attitude of feeling entitled to judgment. Matthew chapter 5, here we go. And the next section, which we love. And if you greet only your own people, if you greet only your side, what are you

doing more than others? Do not even the pagans do that. Be perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect.

We are most definitely going to be reviewing these verses again in the coming weeks. But here's the point. As Yeshua followers, we are required to bear the cross. We are required to absorb offense, hurt and pain and not reciprocate it. If the offenses of the world stopped with Yeshua, then we're called to have them stop with us. We show grace. We show love. We show mercy. Even if you're right, but they need to know I'm right. At what cost? What cost would you pay for your trophy?

That's something we distort so frequently. Because the thing that causes you to continue engaging and fighting about viewpoints and opinions, it's called pride. That's what the struggle is. Ask me how I know.

Even when people we are close to say something we feel is a bit stupid, we still love them, right? Apart from their viewpoints. And here's the important part. We show grace. Why? Because we're all on the same side. And that side is Yeshua. And we need to stop looking for reasons to be upset with others and start looking for reasons to not divide. We need to stop looking for ways to grow an exclusive group that orbits our viewpoints within a fellowship and stop looking for excuses to keep our pride at the offense of sacrificing relationships.

Simon and Matthew at the Table

When Yeshua sat around at his table and his followers broke bread, they had different viewpoints. You have Simon, a zealot. Y'all remember Simon the zealot? Y'all know what zealots were like in the first century? They were like these far—I hate to say far right, because I'm using a term that probably wasn't, but far right militia, like gun-toting, someone who assumes that they're an ultimate patriot because they're willing to kill the enemies of their country. Those were the zealots of the first century. They were known for assassinating and killing Roman guards in city public squares, like Hitman style, like Assassin's Creed style. Just a little knife, and they'd keep going. That's who they were known as.

Simon had an opinion about Caesar and all the people that supported Caesar. And then you have Matthew. I believe Matthew probably supported government reach into the private sector a little bit more than Simon did. Matthew was a tax collector. He certainly enjoyed the benefits of the state, at least for a time in his life. That's how he made his money, by directly supporting Caesar. I assume he still likely had political ideas about the Roman Empire even after he started following Yeshua. Yeah, maybe we should give a little bit of taxes to Rome. They supply us with

all the social benefits, this education, this military force, public works in our cities, pretty nice. Maybe we need to increase a little bit of taxes. Forgive that slave debt that so many are consumed by. And they gave me a job, I don't know. Give me grace here. I believe Matthew had an opinion about Caesar based on his life experience. And I think Simon had an opinion about Caesar and politics based on his life experience.

And I guarantee you, Simon and Matthew bickered a lot about their viewpoints on politics or masks or vaccines or homeschooling or breast milk or essential oils or what is considered work on the Sabbath or what shape the earth is. They had stark viewpoints about stuff. But when they sat down at the table, they broke bread. They were not on opposing sides. They had only one side and that side was Yeshua sitting at the head of the table.

You can have your viewpoints. Don't use them to feed your pride. Don't use them to measure up other people. Don't use them to divide. And don't take the devil's bait when you don't like that someone else has a different viewpoint.

Living in Peace

Worship team, you guys can come up. Paul talks a lot about fellowship. That was his thing. And in [2 Corinthians 13](#), 11, he says this: Finally, brothers, rejoice and aim for restoration. Comfort one another. Agree with one another. Live at peace with one another. Live at peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you always.

We are called to view all relationships through the lens of God's love poured out on the cross. We are called to withstand allowing offense to take root. We're called to forgive. We're called to wrap our arms of love around those we don't think deserve it. We're called to put our swords down, aim for restoration, comforting one another, agree with one another, and live in peace.

Sometimes when searching for a rooted identity in this world, our sights get so focused on what our differences are instead of what we have in common. And this tends to grow into a character trait of choosing who belongs in our circle and who doesn't. This is something Paul talks a lot about in Romans. In [Romans 12](#), 18, he says this: If I say everyone, look at your neighbor and say everyone.

Finally, in [Philippians 1](#), 9, Paul says this. And this is his prayer for the community of God. He says, This is what I pray. Pursuing love and peace is hard. It takes placing your pride on the altar instead of the relationships of others around you.

And so again, Pete kicked us off last week with a series of messages we hope to be focusing on what Yeshua taught about community and about the kingdom of God and about what bearing the cross looks like. And I would ask that you stand as we conclude in worship.

Guys, I don't know where you're at today. I don't know where you're struggling to navigate offense and bitterness, unforgiveness. Maybe you were hurt a long time ago, and maybe that's not something that you ever thought you'd be able to let go of. I can tell you from what the scripture says, what the spirit of God says through these words, there is peace that you can have that is so great that you never thought was possible. And you can leave that behind. Offenses don't have to bait you. Give grace.

Guys, as always, during this time, we have a prayer team. If you need prayer for anything going on in your life, if you just need someone to lift you up before the Father, guys, I advise you to take advantage of that. We're called to be a stronger community. We're called to be a community that has deep roots. Are we willing to go through the winds and be shaken so that our roots can grow?

Alvina Malkinu, our father, our king, father, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for this opportunity to talk about your word, to talk about life, to talk about this world that you've planted us in, and talk about the community that you've planted here. And we thank you, father, in the name of Yeshua, that you would ever plant us together. Despite being of diverse backgrounds, despite having viewpoints based on life experiences that are unique to us, we thank you for this opportunity to talk about your word, to talk about life, to talk about life experiences that are unique to us. You have called us together to be on one side, and that is the side of your son as king of creation. We thank you, Father, and we ask that your Holy Spirit would continue to do its job within our hearts to convict and to grow, to conform us to his image, whoever we may face, that we can truly have peace with everyone. In Yeshua's name we pray, amen.

Closing & Connection

And I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we invite you to take part in making sure the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach others. To make sure this happens, you can donate through our online giving portal at [foundinatruth.com slash give](https://foundinatruth.com/give) or by texting any amount to 704-275-0752.

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Shalom.

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