

THE WORD OF GOD IS MY PLUMB LINE

The Obstacle of Offense

Several years ago I struggled with an obstacle of offense that blocked my path and brought me to a standstill. Someone very close to me had hurt me deeply, and I was struggling with not letting it get the best of me. Just when I thought I was doing better, something would happen to bring it up again. It was hindering my progress and I was praying for God's grace. I didn't have the answers on how to handle this obstacle...until the Lord let a book literally fall into my hands. I was cleaning my husband's office, praying as I worked. As I reached up to dust a shelf, a thin little booklet fell out of nowhere right onto the table in front of me. When I looked down and saw the title, it shouted at me, "***Get Over It.***" (God does have a sense of humor!)

It was a God moment. When I sat down to read it through, tears began to roll from my eyes. God was speaking to my situation. I learned that the hurt and misunderstanding I was experiencing was actually an "offense" that I needed to release and get over.

The Greek word for "offense" actually comes from the word "skandalon" from which we get the word "scandal." It refers to the part of a trap to which bait is attached. An offense is a trap the devil has baited to cause us to stumble and fall. This was a revelation to me. I didn't even realize that the pain I was feeling was an offense and that I needed to deal with it before it got the best of me. A person who has been hurt by another person's actions has actually been offended. The enemy uses offenses to separate and divide people within the body of Christ. John Bevere has since written a book called, *The Bait of Satan*, which I recommend highly for dealing with hurt feelings.

Offenses are seeds which produce unforgiveness and bitterness. The longer we hold on to an offense, the more it affects our entire personality, attitude, actions, perspective and relationships. We can actually miss miracles if we hold on to hurt feelings or offenses. God used His Word to help me overcome this obstacle. God had to adjust my thinking and response, which brought healing to my soul. That's the plumb line of His Word!

The Word of God adjusts us in all of our parts. To align something means to arrange or adjust in a straight line. His Word brings us into a straight line, in agreement with God and His Word. We align the front end on a car to make the tires perform their best and to bring the entire vehicle into proper working order. A chiropractor adjusts our spine to bring our total body into healthy alignment of all its parts. I align myself with the Word by making it part of my daily diet. I'm aligned when I change something to make it fit or adapt to a situation to put it in proper order or position. Alignment is concerned with my focus and perception and brings wholeness to my life.

©2011

DAY ONE

1. Can you see what Acts 26:14 (NIV) has to do with alignment?

2. What word is repeated in Ecclesiastes 12:11 (NIV)?

3. Do you see this word in Judges 3:31 (NIV)? Can you define it?

A “goad” is a pointed stick that was used to urge cattle. We read in Judges 3:31 that Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad. The goad is a weapon sometimes ten feet long with a sharp point used by ploughmen for guiding their oxen. The expression “*don’t kick against the goads*” refers to not resisting superior power. It is a Greek proverb meaning “useless resistance”—it hurts when I don’t yield to the yoke of God. It’s there for my protection, and He assures me His yoke is easy if I don’t resist.

Ecclesiastes 12:11-12 above is confirmation of that truth. ***“The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.”*** God’s Word can be pretty pointed as it urges me to “get with it!” The wise words of God will hold me firmly together when I pay attention to them.

Yielding or surrendering to His guidance through the Word is key to a rich life of blessings. We have a sure foundation when we live according to the Word of God, bringing our life into agreement with the plumb line of His commands.

4. Name five descriptions of God’s Word from 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

5. From those same verses, what does Scripture do for the man of God?

6. Describe a time when the Word of God was like a “goad” that got you back on the right track.

7. Can you think of a way the study of God’s Word has equipped you for good works? i.e. challenged you to obey; opened your eyes to a new truth; brought guidance to your life? If so, share it below.

DAY TWO

God corrected my attitude and brought revelation to me when I realized my hurt feelings were actually a dangerous offense that needed my attention. It was more than hurt feelings; it was the bait of the enemy! God brought my situation to the light as I studied Scripture and He gave me a plan of attack in aligning myself to His ways.

1. What does Proverbs 19:11 say to do with an offense?

2. How does Proverbs 18:19 compare an offended brother?

3. From the love chapter, I Corinthians 13:5, what are we to not do with a wrong done to us?

4. What will keep us from offense according to Psalm 119:165?

As I brought my “offensive hurt” to the Lord, acknowledging Him and asking Him to sanctify the situation to His purposes, the Lord spoke to me about being quiet. The Lord told me through His Word to not talk to anyone about my hurt feelings. He instructed me to let go of them as I brought this difficult experience to Him to set apart for His use and my benefit. This was very difficult to do when I longed for sympathy from others who would take my side.

5. How does Proverbs 26:20 compare wood and a fire?

6. What instruction do we get from 1 Peter 3:10 about what we say?

7. What should our resolve be from Psalm 17:3?

8. From Romans 12:14, what are you to do when people persecute you?

“Bless” in this verse actually means “to speak well of.” Ouch! That means when people hurt us, we are not to curse them with our words but to speak well of them. We are not to go to others repeating what they have done in order to receive sympathy and support for our position. We are to pray good things into their lives, and then speak good things about them. We actually “curse” people when we resort to gossip. From the Greek, “curse” means to abhor, detest or feel an intense loathing toward someone. That’s dangerous ground! God warns us about the power of our words.

9. Remember what Proverbs 18:21 has to say about our tongue?

10. From Proverbs 12:18 and 15:4 what is our tongue able to produce?

DAY THREE

Are we able to align ourselves with God's commands regarding the words we speak, especially when we are responding to someone who has offended us? As we study Scripture on this subject, let's resolve that our mouths will not sin but will speak words of life and blessing no matter what the situation.

1. Read Joshua 1:6-7 and list the rewards of meditating and obeying God's Word and not turning to the right or left,

2. What does Psalm 119:59 say the psalmist did when he considered his ways in light of God's statutes?

3. Can you name a time you did a real "about-face" when God gave you a word of rebuke?

There was a time in my early married life when I was teaching school, that I got hooked on soap operas. I enjoyed the drama of daytime television and found myself putting everything else on the back burner so I could get home in time for my daily fix. It was fun because I started with the first episode of All My Children and enjoyed talking about each character like they were real people in my life. I loved the Lord and was praying and reading His Word regularly but this was a blind spot for me. One day I had to consider my ways and turn my feet to obey what God showed me. Psalm 101:3-4 stood out on the page in bright neon lights. ***"I will set before my eyes no vile (base, wicked) thing. I will have nothing to do with evil (it will not grasp hold of me!)."*** At that moment, I knew it was my choice to obey or disregard God's Word to me. It hurt to turn my back on something that I enjoyed so much, but there is reward in obedience. That was the day of my victory over soaps!

4. What does I Corinthians 10:23 say about what we choose to do?

When God doesn't speak a definite command against an activity we must still weigh the benefit of it. There are times something might be permissible for others but it's not for you. We must ask ourselves if participating will benefit our relationship with the Lord. Will it be "constructive" in building us up into the holy temple He desires? It's then we must make the decision to turn our feet in obedience. It takes determination!

©2011

5. What phrase does Isaiah 50:7 use regarding determination?

As people of God, it's time to awaken from our slumber and chase after the Kingdom of God like never before. Let's set our faces like flint in aligning ourselves with God's Word. Let's be doers of the Word and not merely hearers. Matthew 11:12 says, "***The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.***" We are the "violent" believers who must enact whatever measures are necessary to be alert and engaged with God on a regular basis in the secret place. The discipline of prayer and study is vital because it will change our lifestyle and affect the way we speak and live.

6. What will be the result of diligently seeking him according to Hebrews 11:6?

7. What does the Lord ask in Jeremiah 30:21B?

8. In what practical ways can you devote yourself to being close to Him?

DAY FOUR

As we determine to draw near to God through His Word and prayer, we find we have an arsenal available to overcome the obstacles of life. When we braid His truth into the core of our being, we find that our very thought life is effected. We begin to think the thoughts of God. The enemy's tactic is to bombard us with lies and counteract the truth that is in us. Joyce Meyer often states that the battlefield is the mind. That's why it's so important to read, study, memorize, and pray Scripture so its power can cover every situation we face.

1. According to 2 Corinthians 10:5, what do we do with thoughts that are contrary to what God says?

When I allow vain imaginations to become bigger than the knowledge of God, I am in danger of idolatry for I am actually lifting my eyes to something other than Him. It is my responsibility to take every thought captive and not play re-runs in my mind. How many times do we meditate on problems or worries rather than God's Word? We give the enemy a foothold when we get our mind off the Word of God. When we replay the hurtful words of someone over and over again in our minds, we are in danger of losing the victory.

Kay Arthur gives an example of thoughts being guests in the home of our minds. She says that when any uninvited guest comes knocking we need to kick them out and not invite them in for tea. Do not "entertain" these unwanted thoughts. These guests must not be allowed to be part of our lives. This also takes discipline of the soul, and we must set our face like flint to overcome this tactic.

2. What does Philippians 4:8 say we should think about? As you list these things, memorize this verse for future use to help combat the temptation of wrong thoughts.

I have found that if I replace a bad thought with a good one, it helps me to take my thoughts captive. There's an exercise on the next page that I like to do to increase my meditation skills. Just as I keep fit physically by walking and doing weight training routines at the gym, I have to exercise my mind to keep it sound. Thinking the right thoughts makes a difference. Filling your mind with good things is beneficial.

This exercise works well when I'm driving in the car; other times when I wake up in the middle of the night; I've even used it to bring praise or thanksgiving to God in prayer. It helps me to take control of my thoughts and to make Jesus my daily focus.

Starting with A and proceeding through the alphabet, I try to think of a name or attribute of God that I can meditate on or say out loud. Sometimes I use actual names of God found in the Bible, like **Almighty God** or **Prince of Peace**. Sometimes I list God's character traits like **Merciful** or **Gracious**. Sometimes I think of every day descriptive words like **Covering or Umbrella**. Sometimes I even name specific people for which I am thankful, like family members or friends.

Try your hand to see if this format will help exercise your meditation skills. It's an intentional discipline that doesn't happen without some on-purpose determination.

Don't let X, Y or Z throw you! Be creative!
©2011

DAY FIVE

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you through this exercise as you try to come up with another name for God starting with each letter of the alphabet. You can also use one of His attributes that describes His character or even a special blessing that comes from God.

A _____	N _____
B _____	O _____
C _____	P _____
D _____	Q _____
E _____	R _____
F _____	S _____
G _____	T _____
H _____	U _____
I _____	V _____
J _____	W _____
K _____	X _____
L _____	Y _____
M _____	Z _____

Father, thank you for adjusting my thinking. I delight to do Your will and Your Word is my meditation all the day. Help me to obey Your commands and to turn my feet when something in my life is displeasing You. Help me to understand the power of obedience and the blessings that will come into my life when I'm aligned with You. Help me to think on the good things of life. Help me to intentionally exercise my mind so my thoughts are about You. Help me to kick out those bad unwanted guests that want to invade my thought life. Help me to replace those thoughts with the truth of Your Word. I invite You to be the standard by which I think and conduct myself. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

©2011