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We are living in a time and culture where it seems that everybody gets offended by someone else or some political position. How can we avoid being offended by so many traps, so many challenges?

- You may be thinking, “I thought the gospel meant good news?” It does; however to get to the good news, we first have to deal with the bad news.

1. THE BAD NEWS IS AN OFFENSIVE REALITY.

Romans 3:10-12 (NIV) ¹⁰There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

- **Outside of Christ...**
 - o Our legal standing before God is that of guilt because of sin.
 - o Our minds are darkened by sin to the things of God.
 - o Our motives come from a place of hiding or running from God.
 - o “No one is good.” Our attempts at good deeds can’t fix our broken relationship with God.
 - o We are *all* sinners and fall short of God’s glory. (**Romans 3:23**)

Our sin breaks relationship with God and others.

Isaiah 59:2 (NIV) But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

God is life. Separation from God is death.

Romans 6:23 (NIV) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. THE ONE TRUE SOLUTION FOR THIS BAD NEWS IS THE GOOD NEWS.

Romans 5:6-8 (NIV) ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- o God demonstrated His justice and love through the cross.
- o We are powerless to save ourselves from the mess of sin.
- o A sinless Jesus is the only one who could pay the penalty for our sin.
- o He did this out of His great love for us.

We are made right with God through the blood of Jesus by receiving forgiveness for our sin.

Romans 3:25 (NLT) For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past,

Notice this is all provided by God. We cannot save ourselves.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV) ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- o Grace is the free gift that you can’t earn!
- o Faith means to trust God to save you and then to lead you as your Lord.

3. WHY IS FAITH SO IMPORTANT?

- Faith is required to believe Jesus, accept the virgin birth, Jesus’ miracles, the crucifixion, and the resurrection.

The idea of being saved through the work of a *crucified* man is foolish to the world.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV) For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Acts 2:37-39 (NIV) ³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

- o Notice, when they **heard the message and believed** that Jesus was both Lord and Savior, this truth demanded a response.
- o Being “cut to the heart” is deep conviction of sin.
- o **We are to repent**—to turn from our sinful ways, have a change of mind.
- o We are **to confess** publicly that Jesus is Lord our and Savior.
- o We are called **to be baptized**.

4. WE DON'T HAVE TO WASTE OUR ENERGY ON BEING OFFENDED.

- Remember, the gospel is about an offended God who responds with *love*.
- To gain perspective in our offensive world, we must remember any goodness we can offer comes from Christ in us.
- So, rather than choosing offense, we can and have every reason to celebrate the freedom and new life we have in Christ! We are free to live unoffended lives!

Pause and think for a moment how it would feel to go through your day, not being offended...

- o Not getting rattled and irritated over things that are under God's control.
- o What if every time you heard something offensive, you stopped and prayed for the person/people and asked God to draw them to Himself?
- o What if you sought God's heart for each person who offends you, remembering that Christ died for you, even while you were still a sinner?
- o What if you showed kindness to those who offend you, not because you “feel” like it but because that is what Jesus shows you when you offend Him?
- o What if all Christians chose forgiveness and to trust our loving God when faced with all this injustice? What might our world look like? What might our communities, our schools, our workplaces, and even our homes look like?

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: John 3:16, Romans 3:23, and Romans 6:23

Icebreaker: You are going on a 10-day trip. You have plenty of room; you will enjoy it, even though you are not sure where you will end up. What are two essential things you pack, and one “just because I want to take it” item?

1. From the sermon, what was challenging to you personally?
2. Read John 3:16, Romans 3:23, and Romans 6:23 twice. Then read 1 Corinthians 1:20-25. What do these passages tell you about the gospel?
3. What is the “bad news” in these passages? A) What about the gospel can be offensive or foolishness to people? B) What experiences have you had with the gospel being offensive?
4. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16, Colossians 4:5-6, & 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. What do you see about those of us who follow Jesus and the gospel in these passages? A) What are ways we, as messengers or ambassadors, can either get in the way of the gospel or create space for it to be heard?
5. What is your response to today's discussion? Here are some ideas:
 - a. *Head:* Learn to share the story of Jesus.
 - b. *Heart:* Pray for specific people who don't know Jesus. Or confess and repent of an attitude the Holy Spirit has shown you.
 - c. *Hands:* Intentionally build relationships with people with different views than you.
 - d. *Feet:* As you are going about your week, intentionally look for who is in your path and how you could serve or bless them, maybe even pray for them.
6. How have you been challenged or convicted through the “Offended” series? What is your next step in this area?

Resources:

- *Unoffendable* by Brant Hansen
- *Forgiveness* by June Hunt
- *Humility* by Andrew Murray
- Other passages to read about the gospel are: Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:1-7, Hebrews 9:27-28, and Revelation 20:11-15.

Passages to prepare for next week, Jim Putman's State of the Church Address: Philippians 2