

UPDATED AND EXPANDED



*The*  
**HIGH CALL of**  
**FORGIVENESS**  
It's a Mandate

Rosemarie Downer, Ph. D.

# The High Call of Forgiveness

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by

Rosemarie Downer, Ph.D.

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# What Readers Are Saying

In *The High Call of Forgiveness*, Dr. Rosemarie Downer delivers a precious masterpiece. Writing this book was not an intellectual exercise for her – this is directly from the depths of her heart. And, like a precious diamond, after years of life-changing experiences, Spirit-led reflection, and clarity of expression, this book emerged as a beautiful work of art intended to enrich the lives of every Christian! In typical Rosemarie-style, this book is "loud and clear", eye-opening, and vigorously practical. To me, *The High Call of Forgiveness* is not just a book, it's a testimony, a guide, a workbook, and a portal to a higher, better, more purposeful way of living. Read it. Read it again! Practice it!

– Kirk Grant  
Northeast District President, General  
Conferences of the Church of God 7<sup>th</sup> Day  
Management Consultant

*The High Call of Forgiveness: It's a Mandate* explores God's command to forgive. This is a must read for all men and women of God who struggle with letting go of past and present hurts. Using her own experiences and the Word of God, Dr. Downer maps out a road to forgiveness that will be beneficial to all those who love God. Most importantly, Dr. Downer lovingly reminds us that forgiveness is not optional but is a must for all followers of Christ. I highly recommend this book!

—Cynthia Johnson, MS, MBA, PHR  
Maryland, USA

There are many books in the Christian library about forgiveness, but I have never seen one like this. Dr. Downer poured out her soul in this book. She is transparent and she provides very practical information throughout the book. Many people who love the Lord seem to find it difficult to forgive. If this describes you, *The High Call of Forgiveness* is for you; it will help you. Dr. Downer explains why so many people hurt so deeply and find it so difficult to forgive their offenders, and she provides ample solid Bible-based counsel. When you read the book, you will feel like she is sitting across from you advising you to step out in obedience by saying yes to the Father's mandate to

forgive. This will be the book you not only read but it will also impact your life for the better. A blessing awaits you!

– Apostle Adrienne Rogers  
Givers of Life Ministries  
Riverdale, Maryland, USA

*This book is lovingly dedicated to  
all my fellow brothers and sisters  
in Christ who have been offended  
and have found it a challenge to  
forgive. Your heavenly Father is  
touched with the feelings of your  
infirmities, and so am I.*

# Foreword

There are many lessons that our Lord taught us. Among those lessons is the power of forgiveness. Not only did He teach this lesson, but He demonstrated it on many occasions throughout His earthly journey and through His ultimate sacrifice at Calvary. While being wrongfully crucified; punished for a crime He did not commit, cries came from the cross “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. How could He forgive them? Why should He forgive them? At that moment, Jesus was laying the foundation for eternal reconciliation, not just for the roman soldiers, but for all the world. In Galatians 3, Paul reminds us that Christ became a curse for the world. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)

Jesus Christ, He who knew no sin became sin for us that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. It took blood to bring forgiveness. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He (Christ) entered the Most Holy Place *once for all*, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything

was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

Although we can clearly see the importance of forgiveness throughout the Scriptures, it is possible to read it, but still underutilize this powerful weapon. Forgiveness is a choice that one must make to release someone from an offense and love them through the lens of our transformed life in Christ.

Forgiveness is greater than the moment. It opens the door for a lifetime of gratitude, knowing that because Christ has forgiven us, we must in return forgive others. Forgiveness does not come with restraints or time limits. Christ forgives instantly and we too must make the decision to forgive without hesitation or reservations, which sometimes leaves us wondering will it happen again. Just think about the times we have asked Christ to forgive us for a repeated offense and He did it IMMEDIATELY!

When we limit how we forgive others it only places us in a dangerous position of harboring the offense and having ill feelings towards the offender. Walking in unforgiveness can be deadly to our progress and our earthly assignments. Unforgiveness is the breeding ground for pride, malice, hatred, and regrets. It ultimately impacts us

in every aspect of our lives; physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. What we choose to hold against another — and sometimes even hold against ourselves — has the potential to delay what God wants to do in and through us.

At some point in our lives, we will all face betrayal, hurt, and disappointments just as Jesus did. How we choose to handle them is what matters the most. We will all be on both the receiving and the giving side of forgiveness and we must decide to forgive or choose to harbor the offense. Unforgiveness says don't let go, while forgiveness says let it go and be free! Healing comes when we choose to forgive. Forgiveness is not an option, it is actually a mandate given by God that comes with some pretty amazing benefits.

There is an old saying, “forgiveness is not for them, but it's for you.” Truthfully, forgiveness is for you and for them. When you think about how important freedom is, you will quickly realize that forgiveness produces another level of freedom.

Forgiveness is the key to the true freedom you desire. This book “*The High Call of Forgiveness*” will guide, counsel, and equip you to exercise the courage needed to use the key of forgiveness to unlock your life and enter into a freedom that comes only through forgiveness. The highest price has already been paid for your freedom. It is time

for the Lord to get a return on the investment He made in you as you willingly answer, “The High Call of Forgiveness.”

– Bishop Kenneth W. Chism  
Restoration House International  
Beltsville, Maryland

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## Introduction

**I** am inviting you on a journey that will take you to a new place in your walk with the Lord, a new place in your emotional well-being, a new you. Change is required for you to get to this new you. Are you ready for change? Are you ready to do the work that change requires?

Unforgiveness robs us of the beauty, the peace, and the emotional wellness that naturally belong to us, as they were purchased for us with the precious blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Yes, Jesus paid the price for these blessings, and we should access them in this life – today, now. They belong to us. We are to have life and have it abundantly here on earth, not when we go to heaven. That abundant life is to be marked by healthy, peaceful, trusting relationships.

Unforgiveness has robbed far too many of us of this great blessing. Many have built walls to protect their wounded souls and have been stuck inside

those walls for too long. If this is you, you are on the right track. That you're reading this material this very moment is evidence you have started your journey towards change.

The journey begins with an understanding of the strategy behind offence, especially for believers and the body of Christ. You will be reminded that forgiveness, despite the nature or source of the offense, is required by your heavenly Father without negotiation.

This book is for those who are in the throes of pain caused by misdeeds done to them. Or maybe you have pushed whatever happened to you so far back in your memory that it appears as if you have forgiven but you have not done so. It might have happened today, yesterday, last week, last month, last year, or decades ago; it does not matter.

Regardless of what happened and how deeply hurt you are, God your Father can heal you. Yes, He can! Jehovah Rapha is our healer, and there is no hurt, no wound that He cannot heal. There is no dead place that He cannot revive. Hallelujah!

It is an established fact that many, Christians included, struggle with unforgiveness. We get deeply hurt when we are offended, and most of us hold on to the hurt; but why?

By the time you finish reading this book, you will understand and learn...

- the benefits of forgiveness.
- the gross disadvantages and consequences of unforgiveness.
- why some find it so difficult to forgive.
- why some are so easily offended.
- some practical steps to healing.

Each chapter ends with some takeaway points and an exercise that will force you to think through, pray about, and apply the information covered. I end the book with the assurance that God our Father wants us healed and whole, and that He has not asked us to do anything that He will not give us the grace to do. He is a just Father. He has not set us up to fail by mandating that we do the impossible. You can trust Him. If He demanded it, that means He has already provided the means to accomplish it. This book will walk you through the process to affirmatively respond to this divine mandate.

I encourage you to read this book prayerfully. Read it with an open heart so that God the Healer can do the work that He needs to do to fully restore you. Be blessed!

## Prayer for All Readers



*Father, I come to You in the name of Your  
dear Son, Jesus.*

*I ask on behalf of all readers of this book  
that You release healing and restoration  
through every single word of this book.*

*Let life flow from every page to the  
wounded, scarred, and dead places in the  
lives of the readers.*

*I seek Your strength and grace to enable  
every reader to take the necessary steps to  
walk in the healing and deliverance You  
have for them.*

*I declare this to be so, and I thank You,  
Father for Your gracious move of love.*

*In the name of Jesus.*

*Amen.*

# 1

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## It's a Strategy

*Strategy is a thought-out plan, entailing clearly defined steps, leading to a defined goal.*

– Rosemarie Downer

**A**t the risk of being perceived as giving Satan more credit than he deserves, let me say Satan does nothing without a goal in mind. A person who does something without a goal in mind is not very smart. Whenever Satan launches an attack, he does so with a target and a fixed intent. This is confirmed by the caution given in Scripture that if we are ignorant of Satan's devices, he will be advantageous over us.

*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

**—2 Corinthians 2:11 (KJV)**

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Believers in Christ often underestimate Satan, our adversary. This is a very costly mistake. Some believe that if we do what we ought to do, in other words obey the Scriptures, or if we do not bother anyone, then Satan will not bother us. Others live as if Satan does not exist; they negate his existence. Another set knows very well that he exists, but they ignore him. Erroneously, they think if they do not cross over into his territory, he will not bother them. These are grave mistakes.

A nationwide survey conducted by The Barna Group to assess adults' spiritual beliefs, among other things, asked about their beliefs about Satan. Of 1,871 self-described Christians, forty percent strongly agreed that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil." An additional nineteen percent said they "agree somewhat" with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: twenty-six percent disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining eight percent were not sure what they

believe about the existence of Satan.<sup>1</sup> This marks ignorance of Satan's existence, let alone his devices and 2 Corinthians 2:11 warns us against being ignorant of Satan's devices.

Based on 2 Corinthians 2:11, it is very apparent that Satan plans his attacks. Do not underestimate him. His moves are not haphazard. They are not random or arbitrary. They are deliberate and well thought out.

Scripture says we should not be ignorant of his devices. A device is a scheme, a trick, or a ploy. A scheme can be defined as a systematic plan. The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines scheme as "a clever and often dishonest plan to do or get something." One cannot randomly execute a device; it must be sensibly planned for it to be effective. So, after embracing the fact that Satan does indeed exist, we must note that Satan plans carefully before he attacks. He is in no way wiser than our God, but do not underestimate him, and do not ignore him.

The Greek word for "ignorant" is *agnoeo*. The meaning of *agnoeo* is "without knowledge or understanding of." The English word *agnostic* is derived from *agnoeo*. The word *ignore* also comes from *agnoeo*. Therefore, we are admonished in 2

Corinthians 2:11 not to ignore or lack understanding or wisdom of the strategies of Satan, because if that is the case, Satan is likely to get the better of us.

I have heard or read that Satan does not tempt us in areas where we do not have an appetite. I must agree with this statement because James 1:14 (KJV) says, *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”* This Scripture points out that our temptations are rooted in our own lusts or our appetite or desires. That means our temptations are internally driven. If that is the case, how does Satan know how, when, and where to tempt us? Why is he so successful when he tempts us?

It must be because Satan studies us. He cannot read our minds, so he pays keen attention to the words that proceed out of our mouths and he carefully observes our behavior. He then uses the data he collects about us to inform his strategies against us.

By the time Satan launches, he is reasonably informed about our strengths and weaknesses, our likes and dislikes. We see this in Scripture. Satan patiently waited forty long days while Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness. He knew what Jesus

was doing in the wilderness, and he knew that Jesus – being the God-man at the time – would be hungry when He broke the forty-day fast.

So, what did Satan do? He capitalized on a long-awaited moment. As soon as Jesus the God-man ended His fast, being hungry like any man would be hungry, Satan pounced on Him. He used the information he gathered on Jesus to formulate his temptations. He tempted Jesus where he knew Jesus would be weakest. Satan knew the God-man would be extremely hungry after such a long fast and he saw this as the opportune moment.

Satan's strategy is to strike when and where his target is weakest. As stated in Matthew 4:1 (KJV), *"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."* Jesus was tempted throughout the forty-day fast in the wilderness, but three well-planned assaults were reserved for His weakest moments. Clearly, Satan was not successful with his temptations in the wilderness, but with all the information he had collected and Jesus being at his weakest, he must have been quite confident that Jesus would yield.

Note, the very first of the three offers that Satan made to Jesus was to satisfy what is most likely the deepest need a person could have after a forty-day

fast — food. Satan strategically went for what would be the weakest place in a person who had just ended a prolonged fast.

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*And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. <sup>4</sup> But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. —Matthew 4:3-4 (KJV)*

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Most times when Satan tempts or attacks us, we must bear down in our spirit to resist him. We must pull from the reserves, the dregs of our strength to resist him. That is so because he plans very carefully before he plunges. He takes time to study us before he moves in. Thus, when he hits, he hits hard, and he hits where we are weakest. And do not forget, he is in no hurry to attack. He takes his time to study us; so, after careful study, he is well informed about the vulnerable places in our lives. That is when he strikes.

Satan waited forty long days to tempt Jesus in this area. He patiently waited on Jesus, and he is doing the very same to us today. Our prayers, fasting, worship, fellowshiping with the saints,

Word study, and all our other religious practices do not deter him. He is patient. We can stay in our prayer closets as long as we want, we can fast as long as our bodies can carry us; he can wait until we are done. We must come out of our prayer closets and face life, and we must end that fast one day. Our adversary is waiting.

When Satan attacks us, his intent is to outsmart us. He aims to deceive and defeat us with great ingenuity. The Greek word for *device* is *oema*, meaning “purpose” or “the intellect.” Satan’s devices are purposeful; they are goal-oriented, and he uses intelligence to design and execute them. His intelligence is what he learns about us. It is synonymous to military intelligence, which is “a military discipline that exploits a number of information collection and analysis approaches to provide guidance and direction to commanders in support of their decisions” (from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). We must keep in mind, however, that the devil can know only what we disclose or expose to him; and we do this primarily through the words we speak.

## Know Your Enemy

If Satan is so deliberate about studying us, why don't we study him? A great deal of difference exists between intellectually knowing a thing and realizing what that thing really means. We must remember and realize that the Christian life is constant warfare. An incessant war is taking place for our souls. Moreover, Scripture makes it perfectly clear that this warfare is from the beginning and will continue right to the end of time.

Apostle Paul counseled his mentee Timothy.

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*This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; – 1 Timothy 1:18 (KJV)*

*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. – 1 Timothy 6:12 (KJV)*

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We must not underestimate what Satan can do. The enemy of our souls has a very comprehensive, detailed, and purposeful plan for outsmarting us.

And one of his main tactics is to eliminate from Christians the very element of warfare itself. Therefore, many Christians today are non-warring people. Many of us walk this walk totally oblivious to the fact that we must be fully armored and always positioned for war. When Nehemiah and his workmen were under attack, they worked from sunrise to sunset with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other (Nehemiah 4:17). Our walk today is no different. Our Sanballat and Tobiah are very much alive.

Far more spiritual casualties occur in Christendom due to lack of opposing the enemy than due to fighting him. Some in the fight have been bruised and wounded and knocked down temporarily. These warriors may be casualties for the time being, but as fighters do, they get up and keep on fighting. However, far too many casualties occur simply because Christians did not fight.

Furthermore, I would presumptuously say we are often overtaken by Satan because many of us underestimate his wit and capability. We will not overcome Satan if we are unaware of his strategies and capabilities. We will not win if we are unaware of how he fights or attacks. To triumph over Satan,

instead of him being triumphant over us, we must know his mode of operation when he fights.

If knowledge is power, then ignorance is weakness. When we are ignorant of Satan's devices, our abilities to fight him are weak in comparison to his abilities. When we know his strategies, we disempower him. If we understand our opponent, the devil, he will be much weaker than we are. On the other hand, if his strategies surprise or confound us, we are at a great disadvantage.

We must know and understand what Satan believes and wants. We must know and understand where he is coming from and where he is heading. We must also know and understand how he routinely acts and reacts to different situations. We must be acquainted with his common methods of operation and what he does best. This will put us in a stronger position to respond to his attacks.

For a boxer to win a fight, he must take the time to learn the moves and ways of his opponent in the ring. Does the opponent punch mostly upward, sideways, or straightforward? Does he jump around a lot, or does he tend to work his opponent to the rope? If the boxer learns the style of fighting employed by his opponent, he can anticipate his moves, minimize the surprises, lower the chances

of being caught off guard, and more likely win the fight.

It is no different with Satan our adversary. We must become aware of how he comes at us each time. The truth is, if we stop and think, we will see that we are often tempted on the same issue and in the same way. The surprising thing is, we often fail repeatedly on these very same issues. This is so because we are unaware of the strategies the enemy uses against us, and in some cases, we do not even know ourselves well enough to realize we are failing miserably in the same areas time after time. Consequently, we do not know how to position ourselves to overcome the temptations of the enemy. So, he catches us off guard, and as a result, gets the better of us.

The devil's strategies are fully exposed in Scripture, so that is a particularly good place to start studying him. But if we examine our lives to this point and address our areas of weakness before the Lord, we will become victorious over the devil in the areas where we have formerly failed repeatedly. We can also learn the strategies of the enemy from the victories we have experienced and from the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Satan the Great Opportunist

Satan is a prowler. The First Epistle of Peter (5:8, KJV) cautions us to *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* Satan goes about looking for unguarded areas of our lives (our heart) to devour. He has come to kill us, steal from us, and destroy us (John 10:10). Satan is a deceiver. He is a murderer and the father of lies (John 8:44). There is no truth in him. He originated lies. Every word that comes out of his mouth is a lie. He cannot tell the truth. He is a slimy, sneaky, slippery snake.

Satan attacks in every area where he gets an opportunity. He will wreak havoc in every area of our lives that we make available to him. Note that Satan can impact our lives only in the areas to which we give him access. He cannot go where we do not allow him to enter. If Satan’s role is to entice or tempt us to transgress against the Word of our God, and if the breeding ground for temptation is our own lusts (James 1:14), then he must initiate the temptation from within us. And who has control over our inner man but us? *“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”* (Proverbs 25:28, KJV). So, if we cannot rule our own selves or guard our heart with

diligence (Proverbs 4:23), we have essentially given Satan access; and if we are not careful, he will rule there.

In this case, we are talking about offense. Offense originates in hurt, which can only occur in the context of relationships or any level of interaction with other people. An inanimate object cannot hurt us; it requires people to cause hurt that could ultimately lead to offense. Therefore, any relationship with any level of fragility is an open invitation for an infraction to be done by one towards another. Satan knows he cannot attack unless we give him the opportunity, so he works tirelessly to create those weak links in our relationships. Ofttimes, his efforts are so subtle that the destruction is happening right before our eyes, yet it goes unnoticed. This could be extended family, parent-child, work, spousal, or even relationships with the members of the body of Christ – brothers, sisters, and leaders alike.

Jesus foresaw this happening in the church, and that is why He prayed like He did in John 17. There, He prayed a very intense prayer, often referred to as the High Priestly Prayer, for His disciples and for those who will believe in Him through the disciples' message (verse 20). That includes all

believers of Christ that would come after the disciples. That includes you and me. Jesus prayed for us in John 17. He prayed for us to be one so that the world may believe that His Father sent Him (verses 21 and 23).

Verse 23 is powerful. This is what Satan is trying his best to prevent when he causes division in the church, and one of the leading causes of division in the church is offense. For those who may not agree, let me share a few examples.

The differences in doctrinal beliefs are not what cause the division; it is the offense that comes due to how those differences are handled. The disunity is not caused by the insecurities of a lay member or a member of the ministerial staff. It is how the insecurities are manifested and how others respond to the manifestations that cause the disunity. For example, the need to be reassured of being part of the “in” group may be manifested by setting up doctrinal litmus tests to see who is in and who is out. The test could be knowledge of eschatology (the study of last things – interpretation of prophecy) or any other doctrine. Because this broken person is striving to stand out or to be part of the “in” group, his/her efforts are likely to cause offense.

A final example: the need to be recognized as the preacher of the house. The called and anointed preacher is not the disunity; it is how this need is expressed. What causes the disunity are the behaviors that are carried out to meet this need. Even if the person is indeed a called and anointed preacher, it is the actions taken to ensure people recognize the call upon the person's life that will cause the disunity. So, you see how the devil can take what seems to be the most innocuous things and wreak havoc in the church. Unfortunately, these things happen every day in the life of the church.

John 17:23 says, *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."* Satan knows that the church is most effective when we are united. He knows that the world will not know that God, who loves the world just like He loves His only begotten Son, sent Jesus His Son to save them. If the world does not come to the knowledge of this truth, they will not be saved. That is exactly what Satan wants, so he works to that end.

Satan knows we are least effective at carrying out the great commission to make disciples if we

are not united. He also knows his outcome. He will be bound and cast in a bottomless pit. He will be shut up, and his dominion on the earth will be terminated so that he can no longer deceive the nations. He knows that his destination is the lake of fire and brimstone where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:1-3,10), and his intent is to take as many as he possibly can with him.

With that determination, he seeks to deceive the saints and to hinder the church from making disciples. Because his efforts are not random, but are instead well planned, he has figured out the best way to cripple the church from carrying out the great commission.

Keep in mind that as commanded by Matthew 28:19, the church may still go into various parts of the world and share the gospel, but our works will be fruitless if we are not united. So, when Satan meets with his imps, his mantra is “Keep them divided. They will still have church. They will still do ministries. But they will be ineffective.”

Offense is linked to hurt, pain, and broken relationships, which are manifested in disunity or lack of oneness. So, by causing offense in the body of Christ, Satan can accomplish the goal of dividing

us, henceforth hindering us from winning the lost to Christ. By winning the lost to Christ, we reduce the number of victimized souls Satan can take with him to his destiny of eternal fire and damnation, and that is the very opposite of what he wants.

The presence of offense in the body of Christ leaves us with only a form of godliness, but no power to make disciples. With a form of godliness and no power, our message to the lost is ineffective. When we are offended, instead of looking out for the interest of others, we seek to protect and vindicate ourselves. Disunity dissipates the love of Christ, and offense shifts our focus from God's agenda to our agenda.

Without the love of Christ in the body of Christ, which is best demonstrated through the oneness Jesus prayed for in John 17, we cannot carry out the great commission. This strategy to cause offense in the body, resulting in disunity, is well planned, and when it works, the impact is inordinate. It literally strips the body of Christ of its power to execute one of the most important commands given to us by Jesus before He ascended – make disciples.

When there is disunity or offense in the body, the world may see church, but they will not see Christ in us, and they will not experience the love

of Christ through us. The love of Christ in us is supposed to provide the opportunity to the world to experience the love of the Father. The love of the Father in us is meant to bring the world to the realization that God sent His Son to save the world from sin.

We lose the capacity to love like Christ loves when we are offended. Consequently, this is one place where Satan puts a lot of effort. Sadly, this strategy has worked far too well for him. When Satan causes offense in the body of Christ, he knows that great return on his investment is highly probable. So, he plans very carefully before he launches an attack. When he hits, he is not thinking about you or me. He is not thinking about an individual. Instead, he is thinking about mass returns. He knows that if he can pit us against each other, we will be wounded and rendered incapable of doing the will of our Father.

The impetus for writing this book is a painful experience I had just before what I believe would have been a divine intervention of God. I knew a beloved child with a seizure disorder in the church I was attending. I was led of the Lord to call together the saints who were committed to form a prayer chain on behalf of this child until his healing

was manifested. When I called the meeting, several brethren showed up. The room was full. I shared my heart with them, we prayed, and agreed to move forward with the plan. Our faith was high. We expected results. But within the same week, before we could meet again or begin the prayer chain, Satan launched his attack on me.

I became totally distracted by the incident. I was distraught and deeply hurt. I was caught off guard. I did not know what I know now. Consequently, due to spiritual immaturity, I was totally thrown off and in no position to take the lead on the prayer chain, so it fell apart. It became apparent to me, in the ensuing months, that this was nothing but the plan of the devil. He saw the impending move of God our Healer and seized the opportunity to intercept it. The unfortunate thing is that he was able to find vessels in the church that he could use to do his dirty work. Someone gave him access.

Now, think of the impact if God had divinely intervened and healed the child. Many would have seen the glory of our God and, as declared by the Scripture, would have been drawn to Him because of His demonstrated love and power. I believe it would have revived the faith of many believers

who doubted God as the One who could heal this child. So, the impact would have been great.

Secondly, the assault came at a time when the youth ministry that I was leading was at its peak. The young people were excited about God. They were growing spiritually. Satan saw that, and he knew that if he could get the shepherd (me), the flock (the young people) would scatter; and that is exactly what happened. Again, be reminded that when Satan launches, he is not thinking of the one person that feels offended, he is not thinking of an individual. He is thinking of mass effects.

Think of the lost souls that we could win for Christ if we are not offended. By allowing offense and disunity among us, we empower Satan to keep these loved ones for whom Christ died in his merciless claws.

Satan knows that if he gets one member of the body of Christ, he can make progress toward accomplishing his larger agenda, which is to take as many as he can with him to his impending doom. His objective is to keep us churchy, but powerless, making our message of no effect.

Again, Satan is not thinking about individuals. He is thinking about mass effect. He knows that if he can disempower one of us, he has in fact

impaired the body of Christ. One could ask, how is it that the church is disempowered when one individual or a few individuals and not the entire body is offended? Apostle Paul's discussion of the members of the body in 1 Corinthians 12 speaks very well to this issue. Here he explained that there is diversity in the body of Christ, but we are one.

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*Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body. <sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"*

**—1 Corinthians 12:15-21 (NIV)**

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In other words, all the members of the body of Christ are interconnected and mutually dependent on each other. The body of Christ cannot operate at its full capacity without the cooperation and support of the other members of the body. That being the case, if one member of the body is negatively affected, then the entire body is affected. If our right arm is affected, it may not affect our digestive system or our sight. But rest assured, with a dysfunctional arm, the body will not operate at its best. The same thing applies to the spiritual body. If one member of the body is offended, it affects the entire body by causing some level of dysfunction.

## Seven Main Takeaways – Chapter 1

1. We must know our enemy.
2. Satan is a strategist. He plans very carefully before he launches an attack.
3. Offense in the body of Christ is a strategy that is often used by Satan to cause disunity.
4. If the church is not united, the world will not know that God who loves them dearly sent His Son to save them.
5. When Satan launches an attack on one follower of Christ, he is not solely after that individual. His aim is to achieve a mass effect.
6. The church is ineffective in carrying out the Great Commission when we are not one.
7. The devil can only tempt us in the places of our lives to which we give him access.

## Prayer



*Father, help me to be watchful and vigilant so that Satan's attacks against me will never catch me by surprise or overtake me.*

*I ask for extreme sensitivity to the strategies of the enemy and the power to overcome them.*

*Thank You, Father, for Your grace and for victory over the enemy.*

*In the name of Jesus.*

*Amen.*

## 2

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### Offense Must Come

*We should be too big to take offense and  
too noble to give it.*

– Abraham Lincoln

**M**atthew 18:7 tells us that offense will come. *Offense* here means things that will cause us to sin. The Amplified Version refers to offense as a stumbling block. The King James Version says in Matthew 18:7, “*Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*”

While the Scripture can be used more broadly, for the purpose of this discussion, offense is a means by which a person is irritated or annoyed. This offense causes one to feel resentment, disgust,

or anger, and can cause such a disturbance that relationships are severed or damaged greatly. The Scripture is also telling us that as long as we are alive, we will encounter offense; we will face stumbling blocks. Whether we consider it offense or stumbling block, “it must needs be.” We cannot escape it. It is going to happen.

In the natural sense of the word, we think of offense as the reaction of the person that is offended or that person’s feelings of being slighted, insulted, or upset after being wronged. This is why a person who is mistreated by another would say “I am offended.” Offended or offense is the label that is placed on how the person that was wronged feels; it describes the person’s feelings. The mistreatment elicits a response that constitutes being offended. However, in the context of this book, I am replacing the word *offense* with *infraction*. Infraction is the wrong being done to an individual, not the reaction to the mistreatment.

Keeping my application of the word *offense* in mind, Mathew 18:7 would then tell us that being wronged by another is inevitable. As long as we are alive and dwell among the living, someone will wrong us – infraction must come. The only way to avoid being wronged by another is to live in total

isolation where we never interact with another living being in person or virtually, verbally, or nonverbally.

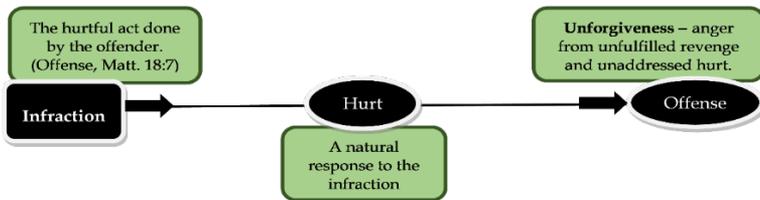
I would even dare say that being wronged by a living being is not limited to humans. For some, because of their connection to their pets, which is another living being, from their perspective, they can be wronged. It could be a cat, dog, rabbit, hamster, or whatever else — because it is a living being with some level of interaction between the pet and the person, again, from their standpoint, they can be wronged by the pet. So, we see, being wronged by another is entirely unavoidable in this life.

Another thing to consider is that none of us know of another individual who is identical to us. I am not speaking of physical appearance, but I am speaking of the way we think, the way we respond to people, the way we process information and experiences in diverse encounters, the way we treat others, and the way we view ourselves. No one in the entire universe does these things or anything else exactly the way we do. Therefore, when two or more people interact, there are immediate differences; and this creates the perfect mix of ingredients for offense to occur. Therefore, unless

we live in a bubble, completely isolated from people, we will encounter offense. Offense must come!

The series of events leading up to unforgiveness constitutes the infraction (referred to as offense in Matthew 18:7). The reaction to the infraction is likely unforgiveness or offense. See figure 1.

Figure 1



People do wrong to and mistreat one another in all walks of life every day. It happens in family, work, church, social settings, and even in casual encounters. It may not be necessary to consider the spiritual operations behind some occasions of mistreatment, but rest assured, it cannot be ignored when the church is the place in which any incident of this sort takes place. The conversation is incomplete and shallow if the whole issue of wrongdoing and mistreatment in the body of Christ, the church, is addressed, and attention is not

given to the spiritual implications or the bigger picture in which these actions are embedded and the huge effects of such actions.

But I want to step away from that for a moment and talk about us as human beings. I want to talk about who we are and how we function when we are not on our knees. Who are we and how do we respond to the many stimuli we encounter every day — good, bad, and indifferent — when we are not in spiritual warfare, when we are not fasting and praying, or even when we are not in church? As we consider these questions, we should also ask why we wrong or mistreat one another? Who is that person that wrongs his/her neighbor?

Let me say early on that it is okay for a person to hurt when wronged, but why do some become so deeply hurt? Why do some find it so incredibly difficult to let go of the hurt? Why do some find it so callously easy to wrong others? I will deal with these questions in more detail in a subsequent chapter, but the short answer is *me, self*. We wrong others because of *me, self*; and we hold on to the hurt when wronged because of *me, self*; and we get hurt as badly as we do because of *me, self*. Given we are not insane, all of us want the best for ourselves. We all are always consciously and unconsciously

seeking to avoid pain and unpleasant situations. Unless there is some form of psychological disorder, we will always choose pleasure over pain.

I want to talk about two things about humans that make offense inevitable: character flaws and emotional wounds. Our character is the product of a combination of how we perceive, process, and respond to stimuli that over time defines who we are. Character flaws are weaknesses, imperfections, deficiencies, or limitations in our character. We all have flaws in some form or the other. No one is perfect.

Character flaws can range from simple, harmless weaknesses to gross deficiencies. But we should note that whether they are minor, major, or tragic, they always interfere with our relationships. This is because our character is who we are, and we always bring that person into our relationships. Understand that we are not always on the receiving end of being wronged or mistreated. We mistreat people as well.

People have flaws and emotional scars that cause them to offend others. It is like a wounded cat stuck in a corner who is afraid of being wounded again. So, even if a harmless child approaches the cat to cuddle and stroke it, it hisses and strikes back

with its claws. Like the wounded cat, the emotionally wounded person is always on guard and, therefore, strikes back even in response to loving outreach.

Our character flaws and emotional wounds can create the openings for Satan to come in and ruin any relationship. Because we are all flawed and no one is perfect, we must know that we all have the potential to wrong someone else and will do so at some point in our life. But we do not have to become a tool in Satan's hands because of our weaknesses. If we recognize our deficiencies, deal with them appropriately, and as reminded in 2 Corinthians 2:11, be knowledgeable of Satan's devices, we will be significantly less likely to wrong others.

## **Emotional Wounds**

Emotional wounds are the result of pain inflicted on the inner person of an individual. They damage a person's self-love. The result of untreated emotional wounds is what I call emotional hunger. These are deep-seated emotional needs that drive our behavior from the subconscious.

First, if we were always criticized as children by our father and could never do anything that

pleased him, we may not feel that we are good at anything. Receiving affirmation from the significant figures in our lives, especially as children, is particularly important to having a sense of competence and high self-esteem. Without a healthy self-esteem and a sense of competence, we will be insecure.

Insecure people feel inadequate; they do not feel good enough. They live with self-doubt and anxiety or excessive concern about their performance, their goals and achievements, their relationships, and their overall ability to handle life. These individuals are at a great disadvantage because this inescapable sense of inadequacy sets them up to scrutinize themselves. Unfortunately, they have learned this destructive behavior, and so they degrade themselves and often seek to do the same to others. Instead of seeing and appreciating the good in others, they compare themselves with those they deem better than them and of course always see themselves as the underdog.

One would ask, if the insecure person already thinks the other person is better, why make a comparison? This is simply an expression of the malady they face. It is normal for the insecure person to feel less than. So, by making the

comparison with a person who they already think is better, the insecure person will only reaffirm to themselves that they are inferior to others. Remember, this is what they already think of themselves. So, though unhealthy, this is a comfortable place for the insecure person. It is almost as if they are frightened at finding out they are good at something. So, they unconsciously look for the easy out.

This all starts in the mind and is often done instinctively. The mere fact that they think to compare themselves with someone is a clear indication that they already think less of themselves. This feeling of inadequacy is a deep-seated emotional wound. The behavioral expressions we see from the emotional wound is the cry of the emotional hunger to be good enough.

The attempt to satisfy this emotional hunger is often made through jealousy of others, especially those with whom they compare themselves. The insecure often become envious of the very ones with which they compare themselves because they see these individuals as having what they lack and desire. They see these individuals as having skills and capabilities or even the self-confidence or assertion that they wish to have.

Second, insecure people also fear feedback. They live in fear of what people think about them. Even when no one is thinking about them, they feel like they are being judged. This causes them to live on the offense. Figuratively speaking, it makes them live behind a wall, which closes them off from people. They do not trust others.

The truth is, they do not trust themselves, but they do not trust others either. They live under this cloud of what seems sometimes like sheer paranoia that everyone else is judging them. Without a doubt, this mindset impairs relationships and offers up the right concoction to mistreat others, even those who care deeply about them.

Other examples include rejection, especially that of significant others, which could lead to lack of assertion and self-hate, undue control that suffocates one's growth and independence, and lack of affection which could result in feeling lonely even when among crowds of people, or the inability to connect emotionally with another person.

None of us is entirely whole. We are all a work in progress, but some are farther along in the progression than others. The individuals with emotional wounds, resulting in unmet emotional hunger, will be hurt much more deeply than

someone who is aware of and comfortable with their strengths and weaknesses. The former is much more likely to feel overlooked and rejected than a person who is self-confident. These individuals are also more inclined to mistreat or wrong others. Feelings of jealousy can cause them to do and say hurtful things to those of whom they are jealous. Similarly, persons who are wounded by rejection will close their heart; they will push away and close out well-intentioned people from their lives, even those who genuinely love them. These behaviors can take shape in many forms of mistreatment to others.

Insecure people also tend to be overly competitive. Without the other person knowing, they often strive to outdo the person with whom they are comparing themselves. In their efforts to outdo that person, it is not uncommon for them to be offensive to the individual in word or deed, often in an effort — consciously or unconsciously — to belittle them. It brings the insecure person mental ease to demean the person of whom they are jealous.

Another situation that could cause emotional wounds or emotional hunger is the case in which one or both parents were emotionally or physically

absent from a child's life, leading to a deprivation of the attention the child needs and deserves from the parents. This child will very likely grow up to be an adult who is hungry for attention. Therefore, we see attention-seeking behaviors in all ages – children, adolescents, and even adults.

Though not limited to this group, individuals with early childhood experiences of this sort strive for the visible ministries and will do almost anything to get there. These individuals often do not like behind-the-scenes roles. They will do good deeds and serve diligently in ministry, but with the wrong motives. Though unknowingly, usually, their intent is to capture the attention of others and get accolades and recognition from the pulpit. This is how they feed their emotional hunger.

A last example is the case of a child with overly controlling parents. Parents should enforce boundaries and monitor their children's behavior, but it becomes unhealthy when parents restrain their children's right to grow into their own person. For example, it is important that children try and fail, and that they make choices and later find out they did not make the best choice.

These could be good life lessons. But when parents control the children's lives to save them

from these experiences, they set them up to doubt themselves and make them dependent on others, not only during childhood, but if not addressed, all through life. Controlling parents can rob their children of their autonomy and ability to make decisions, leaving them in doubt of their own capabilities, having poor self-regulation, and feeling like they do not matter.

The emotional hunger that controlling parents create is the unmet need to feel independent. These individuals often doubt themselves even if they have the capability to do something. Because of the inner scars, having the capability to do something does not negate the fact that the need to feel competent and autonomous exists.

This feeling of inadequacy will engender feelings of insecurity and manifest itself in undue dependence on others. These are the individuals that will knowingly and unknowingly make others feel guilty who do not go out of their way to involve them in happenings. They are also extremely indecisive and tend to expect the world to tolerate their lack of ability to make decisions for themselves. These are factors that can and do cause them to mistreat others in word, expectations, and actions.

A person who already feels incapable of making independent decisions is much more likely to feel offended by, for example, a decision made by a spouse, supervisor, coworker, friend, or pastor. They will feel offended even if their input was solicited. But then, because of their inability to make decisions, they might not have contributed when they had the opportunity; still, when the decision is made, they feel slighted.

While all these things are true for those who are not members of the body of Christ, they are also true for those who are. Accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior does not miraculously heal our emotional wounds. This is a lifelong process for most of us. Therefore, the church is well populated with emotionally wounded individuals. We come with a full range of ailments, and they manifest themselves in various ways. That is why some pastors are always putting out fires – choir members sometimes cannot get along; preachers, singers, and teachers trying to outdo each other; folks serving in ministry only when and where they can be seen; and the list goes on. The underlying cause for these behaviors is emotional hunger. Emotionally hungry people are simply seeking to

meet their emotional needs through unhealthy means, often at the expense of others.

The emotionally wounded are more likely to feel like a victim than a person who is emotionally healthy. They get hurt very easily and are much more likely to be deeply hurt by almost any infraction against them. As a result, they harbor hurt that, if unaddressed, will turn into offense.

Remember, it is not the hurt caused by the infraction that matters. Hurt is a natural response. What really matters is how well we manage the hurt. Hurt caused by an infraction against an individual with emotional wounds or emotional hunger will have a greater and more negative impact on the individual than on someone who is emotionally healthier.

The emotional health of the emotionally wounded is quite frail, and it is out of this place of insufficiency that the emotionally wounded act. Their conduct is directed from their subconscious, a place of hurt and brokenness. Therefore, the way they handle relationships and life's circumstances in general are all expressions of the ways in which they feed their emotional hunger.

The emotionally wounded not only hurt more deeply, but they also handle hurt poorly. They stay

hurt longer and are more likely to become offended. These individuals are less capable of acknowledging that infractions hurt, dealing with the hurt in a healthy manner, and seeking to break free from it. Also, because of their insecurities, these individuals are the ones who are more likely to feel offended even when there is no infraction against them. They are also the ones who embellish a minor infraction and make it a bigger issue than it really is. By doing so, they are feeding their emotional hunger.

## **Character Flaws**

A character flaw is a personal limitation or deficiency that otherwise would render an individual very functional. In general, character flaws can be categorized as minor, major, or tragic. Character flaws can be problematic to the extent that they directly affect our actions and abilities.

Character flaws are often the manifestations of emotional wounds. While emotional wounds tend to cause one to hurt more deeply, character flaws tend to make people hurt others more deeply.

Character flaws can be manifested in all manner of gross behaviors, such as violent temper, angry outbursts, greed, prejudice, dishonesty, and

gossip, to name a few. Alternatively, character flaws can be manifested in non-malicious shortcomings or personality defects that affect our motives and social interactions, such as procrastination, poor time management, misaligned values, victim mentality, perfectionism, and nitpicking.

What I have provided here is an abbreviated list of the hosts of flaws — minor, major, and tragic — with which any human being could possibly present. The mere fact that we all have some form of character flaw is evidence that a person committing an infraction against another is unavoidable. Even what seems like a harmless flaw, such as procrastination or nitpicking, could cause one person to wrong another. For example, nitpicking could cause hurt to someone if the person doing the nitpicking constantly picks at or makes non-affirmative comments about a person or what the person does. Over time, these comments could hurt the person's feelings. In isolated cases, this behavior may not be a big deal, but it can cause significant damage to a person's self-image eventually.

Suppose the person being picked at already has poor self-esteem and doubts his or her capabilities?

Because this emotionally wounded person would internalize the nitpicking and experience deep hurt as a result, this could create the perfect recipe for offense.

Setting emotional wounds aside, we know that humankind is flawed because of the sins of Adam. Scripture tells us that sin entered the world by one man (Romans 5:12) and that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). So, whether we are emotionally wounded or not, we are flawed. We are to repent of our sins, but not all character flaws are sin. However, that does not mean that we, as followers of Christ, should accept and overlook our imperfections. Sincere Christians who are diligently seeking to be like Christ will repent and endeavor to overcome their imperfections.

An especially important distinction exists between flaws and sins. A flaw is a natural result of living in the flesh. A sin is a deliberate transgression against the knowledge of the Scripture and against the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Not all flaws are sins, but all sins are flaws. For example, procrastination may not be an outright sin, but if it causes us to treat people less than ideal, it must be addressed. If it makes us act in any way that does

not bring glory to God, it must be addressed. We should be discontent with our idiosyncrasies, our faults, and our personality quirks if they dim our light in the world.

## **We Are All Flawed**

One could say that the character flawed and the emotionally wounded complement each other. This perspective posits that the character flawed tend to instigate hurtful situations and the emotionally wounded are more inclined to harbor hurt, resulting in offense. Indeed, this makes sense. If one is already wounded, it puts that person in a place to be hurt more easily and deeply. If we have a wounded toe, any impact on that toe will hurt more easily and deeply. It is no different with emotional wounds. For example, the person with self-doubt and low self-esteem is already bruised on the inside, so, criticism about their performance will only irritate the wound to their psyche that is already there.

As stated by Bill Bowen, “Hurt people hurt people.” This is another perspective one could take when considering the role that the character flawed and the emotionally wounded play in causing hurt to others. The emotionally wounded are hurt, and

due to the seemingly unavoidable pain in their own lives or the impact their painful experiences have had on their lives, their response, and possibly their means of coping with the hurt, is to hurt others. Unknowingly, their natural response is often to perpetuate the painful experience.

The general population holds firmly to the belief that most perpetrators of sexual assault experienced sexual abuse as children and, therefore, those who were sexually abused in childhood are more likely to commit sexual assault when they grow up, especially men. In support of this general opinion, research results show that the probability of sexual assault by someone who was sexually abused, as a child, especially males, is higher than the rate of sexual assault in the general population. This is called the victim-to-perpetrator cycle. Similarly, males who were raised in homes where their mother was physically abused or who were mistreated verbally or emotionally by their father (or stepfather) tend to abuse their spouse in adulthood.<sup>ii</sup>

So, it is not just the character flawed that elicit hurt onto others. Here we see that the emotionally wounded are likely to do so as well. Given these facts, all of us have some form of character flaw,

and these flaws will likely negatively impact others. Hurt people hurt people – no one is exempt. We all hurt someone at some point in our lives.

Whether we are thinking of the character flawed or emotionally wounded, hurt caused by one person to another is inevitable. Offense must come!

The mere fact that we are all flawed in some way or another sets the stage for offense. All of this is supported by Matthew 18:7. If you live in this world, offense (infraction) will come.

Now that we know that offense (infraction) will come and that we are very likely to play a part in bringing offense (infraction) to others, we need to guard our hearts so that we are neither victims nor perpetrators of offense (infraction).

## **Seven Main Takeaways – Chapter 2**

1. The likelihood of being wronged by another living being is high as long we live among the living.
2. All of us have shortcomings. None of us is perfect.
3. Emotional wounds create emotional hunger that individuals often spend their lives trying to fill.
4. Character flaws are often the manifestations of emotional wounds.
5. The emotionally wounded hurt more deeply and are more inclined to harbor hurt.
6. Hurt people hurt people.
7. Character flaws can be manifested in a range of behaviors, from hateful to non-malicious shortcomings or personality defects.

## Prayer



*Heavenly Father, I sincerely ask for the strength to uncover and surrender my entire being to You so that You can bring healing to my hidden parts.*

*I ask that You search out my subconscious and reveal any emotional wound that is driving my behavior and give me the grace to surrender it all to You.*

*Heal my brokenness, dear Lord. My desire is to be entirely whole so that I can be used by You to be a blessing to others.*

*This I pray in the name of Jesus.*

*Amen.*

## **Chapter 2**

- <sup>i</sup> Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist. Research Releases in Faith & Christianity. April 13, 2009.  
<https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/>.

## **Chapter 5**

- <sup>ii</sup> Sexual Abuse in the Childhood of Perpetrators. Karine Baril, Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ).

## **Chapter 8**