

Isaiah 48:17

This is what the LORD says--your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow."

Just as Jesus asked his followers to follow Him, God has extended to same invitation to humans throughout history. And following God isn't a one time deal. It's a long haul, a lifelong journey. The Bible leads us on those paths with principles to live by as we follow- what we've been calling: Road Rules.

"Break the Circuit" // "Don't Take Rainbow Road" // "Don't Neglect the Middle of Nowhere"

Cars are driven by humans. Humans make errors.

National Traffic and Safety Administration - **94%** of all auto accidents are due to human error. How do you respond to a driver error? **Half** of drivers admit to resorting to horn-honking, light-flashing, rude gestures, shouting, and aggressive driving after another driver has done it to them. Sometimes, such aggression takes a step further, including tailgating, short-braking, even bumping, and about **2%** of drivers admit to attempting to run another aggressive driver off the road! As if this weren't scary enough, over **two-thirds** of road rage incidents involve at least one firearm, which can significantly raise the danger level, not only for the drivers involved, but other drivers and pedestrians in the area. For all of these reasons, there are an average of **30 deaths** a year due to **road rage**. A lot of times human error doesn't cause the damage, it's the ensuing rage that does.

On the road of life, the path of following God, it isn't a solo ordeal. This isn't a country road you walk alone in silence. We're surrounded by people daily. We intersect people daily. Sometimes there are near misses. Sometimes we collide.

ROAD RULE #4 – Thou Shalt Not Road Rage.

"Offense" - feelings of anger provoked by somebody else's actions.

Day by day we're surrounded by plenty of people. None of them are perfect. And that adds up to plenty of stimulus to find offense in.

Turn on any form of media in our culture and the Q is: *"what are we all outraged about today"*

Social media, the news, our world seemingly is fueled by offense.

It's no secret: the church isn't much better at it.

Ephesians 4:26 (NKJV) – Be angry.

What we can deduce - Anger is not a sin.

Things will happen that will make you angry. And that's OK.

But keep reading Paul in Ephesians 4... look at verse 31...

Ephesians 4:31 in one translation– **do NOT be bitter or angry**

...Wait, what?

Context is key...

Vs 26 - *"don't let the sun go down on your anger..."*

He's laying the groundwork for what he will say in verse 31 – "*Get rid of your anger...*"
Anger will happen. Sometimes rightfully so. Somebody offends you. So you get angry.
But you don't get to keep it.

In a culture of outrage addiction and constant offense, anger can take up residence.
We can choose resentment and let anger take residence. Or release it.

Offense is tricky. Offense isn't just any anger. It's anger provoked by a perceived insult.
We've been slighted. We feel the right to anger.
But to hold onto our anger, according to Ephesians 4, would be to give the Devil a foothold.
The Biblical call to forgiveness means to forfeit our right to it. To release the offense.
Even better? Overlook it entirely.

That's hard!! What's it look like? **2 Samuel 16:5-14** (*context of story...*)

Shimei was angry and held an offense for 2 DECADES over twisted facts and distorted truths.
The other side of the coin- the incredible ability for David to overlook his curses.
To not just not hold onto offense... it doesn't even register!

Shimei had no intention of reconciliation.

Why do he and so many do this with our offense?
Because holding onto offense kind of feels good. Offense offers us a sense of moral superiority.
We've "got something" on someone. It makes us feel more righteous about our behavior when
we take offense at the behavior of others.

What we call "**righteous anger**" is often "**self-righteous anger**"
We get to feel more righteous about our behavior when we take offense at the behavior of others.

There are a lot more **Jonah's** in the church than we'd like to admit. The book ends with him
more concerned and angry over the death of a plant that was keeping him cool than the well
being of 120,000 people. Jonah rebuked wickedness, only to be incredibly disappointed when the
people actually repented. He wasn't interested in seeing them changed & restored, but in being
able to stand over them. Likewise, so often in church culture we aren't interested in calling
people out FROM their sin. We just want to call people out FOR their sin.

***We can't confuse this concept we've come to call "righteous anger"
And come to a conclusion that that anger can reside in our hearts alongside righteousness.***

James 1:20 makes it simple and plain:
"Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires."

In wisdom literature – Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and such...
Wisdom literature makes a living off of juxtaposing the wise and the fool.
Anger is always. Without exception. 100% of the time – associated with foolishness.
Never with wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 is a great one for context in our offense saturated culture –
Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

1.) Anger may come to us. But don't be quick to be offended.

2.) Anger may visit us. But don't let it take up residence in your heart.

Where does anger reside? Not with the wise. In the heart of a fool.

It echoes Ephesians 4. You're going to feel anger and offense. You just don't get to hold onto it.

Valid Q – OK, What about issues of injustice?

David suffered injustices...

...Saul's hunting of David to kill him...

...Absalom's hunt for the throne and coup against his own father...

Here one the road we have Shimei who is accusing David of injustices against Saul.

He's cursing David. And he's disobeying God.

Exodus 22:28 – do not curse the ruler of your people.

David suffered injustice. But unlike David, INJUSTICES I see usually aren't directed at me.

But they are in my world. Systemic injustice. Injustice that affects all of society, rooted in racism, classism, sexism, and all other isms and schisms.

And God hates all of the above.

The Bible makes it clear God hates injustice.

What angers God should anger us, including injustice.

But we have to keep this principle in mind through life, especially with conditions in our culture:

DON'T CONFUSE ANGER WITH ACTION.

We have to separate the two. Anger and action aren't synonymous.

So often in our culture we feel like if we're not *angry* about a situation and we aren't reacting and responding to it then nothing will be done about it. That's false. Surveys have found findings that sparked the term "**slacktivism.**" People who post angry rants are actually LESS likely to do anything about it. Ironically, treating anger as synonymous with action actually means... we rarely act on injustice

The Bible doesn't get this twisted.

Because the Bible gives us hundreds of commands to act.

Never once does it say to do it out of anger.

The Old Testament – **Micah 6:8**

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Doing justice involves **HUMILITY**, not self-righteous anger.

MLK – :

I admonished myself “You must not harbor anger. You must be willing to suffer the anger of the opponent, and yet not return anger.”

I’ll feel anger. I can’t harbor it.

We *better* recognize injustice, because justice is at the heart of the Gospel.

But we can recognize injustice, grieve it, and act against it without rage, malice, and anger.

Think this way: if God’s love for people is truly our fuel, we should have enough motivation to help victims of injustice without needing anger in our tank.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer – *“Jesus will not accept the common distinction between righteous indignation and unjustifiable anger. The disciple must be entirely innocent of anger, because anger is an offence against both God and neighbor.”*

The potential for irony here is Bonhoeffer wasn’t just an author. He wasn’t just a pastor. He was an assassin. As a Bible-believing German, he was part of an assassination plot to kill Hitler with a bomb. Hitler lived, while others died from the explosion. And Bonhoeffer was executed for it.

Was he a massive hypocrite? I would say no. Because to look at his life and his letters was to realize this wasn’t a man fueled by anger, but the desire to protect and defend the innocent because it’s the right thing to do.

Again - If God’s love for people is truly our fuel, we should have enough motivation to defend the defenseless and victims of injustice without needing anger to fuel our tank.

Yet David, for all the reasons he could have cooked up, didn’t act against Saul when he was next in line and Saul was out to kill him. And he didn’t act when the next in line- Absalom – was out to hijack his throne.

David realized another principle we should adopt when dealing with offense.

Sometimes we act out of justice mercy and humility, and sometimes we need to:

BE WILLING TO WAIT ON DAD

David simply waited.

David waited in caves during Saul’s injustices

David waited outside Jerusalem when Absalom unjustly took the throne.

He refused to strike back at either one. He waited. And waited.

If God had truly anointed him, then in his mind there was nothing that needed to be done.

God would take care of it.

BE WILLING TO WAIT TIL DAD GETS HOME

I was one of 4. If one of us was wronged we could strike back, but then both of us would get in trouble. The savvy self controlled move was to tell your sibling who wronged you, “wait til dad gets home.”

In a similar way, holding onto my offense can signify a lack of trust in my Heavenly Father. It's expressing fear that whoever offended me will get away with it, as if God isn't on the job and it's up to me.

David reminds us to act like it in **Psalm 37:6-9**, a passage on the power of waiting:
He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm. For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land.

Anger will come. But David tells us we can't continue in anger. Holding onto anger is a lack of faith. It's a lack of trust. Waiting takes faith. Waiting is trusting.

Shimei's these days are all over the place. They don't have to pull up to the side of a road. They pull up a chair and hop on their keyboard. They don't throw stones they throw words laced with malice. How easily and quickly we can return the volley.

Our culture loves to take offense because it loves conflict for conflict's sake. But Jesus says, "When they persecute you in one town, flee to another." Conflict for conflict's sake wasn't his way. He tells us: Don't waste your time with people who won't listen. News flash: That's 90% of the internet.

So why do we waste our time? **I want to win.**
Win what? An argument?
Jesus didn't tell us to go and win arguments on the internet. He told us to go and make other followers.

REDEFINE THE WIN

Facebook video - "**How to defeat an atheist in 2 minutes.**"

The title turned me off enough to never bother with it.

I'm not interested. Is this what it's come to? When did it become my MO to defeat anyone?

And I'm not disparaging apologetics, but I am challenging the framework we think about it in. Our battle isn't with people. It's with powers and principalities that make victims out of people. We aren't called to defeat people. We're called to usher them into the kingdom.

The apostles apologetics in the book of Acts: "reasoning, persuading, *encouraging*"
It was the opponents of the early church that were "agitating, stirring up, attacking."
The early Christians stood out as even-keeled people in an angry world.

In a culture of **outrage** we must be people of **outreach**.

**Proverbs 11:30 - *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
And he who wins souls is wise.***

Using the wisdom literature's juxtaposition of the fool and the wise:

Fools: Concerned with winning arguments and points

Wise: Concerned with winning people

Fools: Concerned with looking right

Wise: Concerned with loving right

God wants to win people, hearts, and souls. Sign me up to win souls.

But IF you're going to reach those who don't know Christ, here's a CRUCIAL gamechanger:
STOP EXPECTING THOSE WHO DON'T LOVE CHRIST TO ACT LIKE CHRISTIANS

Jesus runs into some wild and immoral people in the Gospels.

Yet he is never shocked by their moral behavior. Why? He knows how we are.

John 2:24-25 – "*Jesus knew human nature. No one needed to tell him what mankind is really like*"

"Faith in humanity" – lost my faith in humanity, something else restored my faith in humanity...

...it's the dumbest endeavor of all time.

It's not about cynicism. Jesus wasn't scornful or jaded. It's about realistic expectations and understanding human nature.

Maybe this is one reason why all the kinds of people that were drawn to Jesus aren't drawn to his followers. We're too busy being offended by the people Jesus loved.

The fruit of David not buying into Road Rage and offense on his journey through life?

The lost were attracted to David. The down and out joined him in hundreds as he hid from Saul.

Could it be he didn't look down his nose, find offense or be surprised by them... He understood humanity?

Another piece of fruit from David not succumbing to Road Rage and offense?

David ENDURED.

He finished his race. He completed his journey. And he did it in a way that God applauds throughout the Bible. He didn't crawl across the finish line. He finished strong. How?

Being offended is tiring business. You can be perpetually shocked and offended – but it's exhausting.

Could it be that the reason it isn't easy to stay happy is because you're so easily offended?

And when offense is unavoidable and hits us. Will you hold onto offense and anger and resentment. Or will you release it?

Releasing it frees you up and gives you back your energy.

The Bible doesn't say that they will know us by our offense at sin and calling it out.

They will know us by our love.

Your maturity isn't best displayed by what stance you take, but by how you love those you disagree with.

In my years of ministry, I have never met a person who fell in love with Jesus because a Christian called out and condemned their morality.

People fall in love with Jesus because he loved them first, even in their mess. He wasn't offended. He took to the offensive and took to the cross.

Jesus didn't call people out FOR their sin. He calls them out OF their sin. Calls forth purpose, destiny, and life... We desperately need to take note.

May we as the Church not buy into a culture that is constantly calling people out. Because we get so busy calling people out for their sin and piling on shame. May we instead call people out of sin and into God's grace and love.

Romans Rd. one of the keys in that is **Romans 5:8**

Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners

He forfeited his right to anger and offense at our sin. Jesus said those who are forgiven much, love much. May we LOVE MUCH. Give up our outrage addiction for a love addiction. And in a culture of outrage, be people of outreach.