

Summary

This sermon, part three of a series called "Don't Take the Bait," focuses on the trap of ignoring offenses rather than addressing them. Pastor Mark draws from the story of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19 to illustrate what happens when we run from offenses that need to be confronted. He identifies five consequences of avoidance: isolation, self-pity, magnifying the offense, drowning out God's voice with internal noise, and forfeiting the role God has given us in each other's lives. Using Matthew 18:15-17, he outlines three practical steps for addressing offenses: (1) go privately to the person and address it directly, (2) bring a neutral mediator if the first conversation fails, and (3) involve a trusted group of believers if the issue still remains unresolved. He emphasizes that for followers of Jesus, there are only two valid responses to offense: let it go or address it directly. There is no third option of spreading the offense to others. The goal is always restoration, dignity, and growth, not punishment.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today as a group of people who are not perfect, who have been hurt and who have hurt others. As we open Your Word and discuss what it means to handle offense in a way that honors You, we ask that You soften our hearts and open our ears. Help us to set aside our own defensiveness and pride, and give us the courage to hear whatever You want to speak to us today. May this time together draw us closer to You and to one another. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one hobby or activity that you find yourself turning to when you need to decompress after a stressful day?

Key Verses

- Matthew 18:15-17
- 1 Kings 19:3-4
- 1 Kings 19:9-10

- 1 Kings 19:11-13
- Proverbs 19:11

Questions

- Pastor Mark says there are only two valid responses to an offense for a follower of Jesus: let it go or address it directly. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you tried to ignore an offense but it kept growing? What did that experience look like for you?
- Pastor Mark describes Elijah retreating to a cave after a major spiritual victory. Why do you think even spiritually strong people can find themselves running from conflict or hard conversations?
- Elijah told God, 'I am the only one left,' even though He knew that was not true. How does unaddressed offense distort our perspective and lead us into a victim mentality?
- The sermon describes internal noise, the story we tell ourselves about an offense, as something that can drown out God's voice. Have you experienced this? How did you find your way back to hearing from God?
- Pastor Mark says that when we ignore an offense, we forfeit the role God has given us in someone else's life. How does that idea change the way you think about having a difficult conversation?
- Jesus instructs us in Matthew 18 to go privately first when someone sins against us. What makes that first private conversation so hard, and what practical steps from the sermon might help you prepare for it?
- The sermon ends with the challenge to turn offense into offense, meaning to use the hurt as an opportunity to speak life into someone else. What would it look like for you to do that in a current relationship?

Life Application

This week, identify one relationship where you have been carrying an unaddressed offense. Spend time in prayer asking God whether you need to let it go or address it directly. If He leads you to address it, take one practical step toward that conversation. You might write down what you want to say using the 'when you do this, I feel this way' framework from the sermon. Ask a trusted friend or your small group to pray for you and hold you accountable to following through.

Key Takeaways

- There are only two God-honoring responses to offense: overlook it completely or address it directly. Spreading it to others is never a valid third option.
- Ignoring an offense that needs to be addressed leads to isolation, self-pity, a distorted view of reality, spiritual deafness, and forfeiting the role God has given you in someone else's life.
- Jesus gives a clear, three-step process for handling serious offenses: address it privately, bring a neutral mediator if needed, and involve a trusted community of believers as a last resort.
- The goal of confronting an offense is always restoration and dignity, not punishment. Even when boundaries must be drawn, the posture should remain one of love and openness to reconciliation.
- The church is God's chosen community to help shape us, and honest, courageous conversations are one of the primary ways we grow into the image of Christ together.

Ending Prayer

Lord, thank You for the time we have had together today to wrestle with Your Word and with one another. We confess that addressing offense is hard and that our natural instinct is often to run, to hide, or to tell someone else. Forgive us for the times we have chosen the easy path instead of the right one. Give each person in this group the courage to take the next step You are calling them to take, whether that means finally letting something go or finally having a conversation they have been avoiding. Remind us that You are with us in those hard moments, that Your Spirit goes before us, and that the goal is always to win people back and to grow together. May we be a community that handles conflict with grace, truth, and love, for Your glory and for the health of the people around us. In Jesus' name, amen.