

CHAPTER 7

HIS MOTIVES

How to deal with feeling offended

**You can't control offense,
but offended—that's all you.**

When I was nineteen, I was gifted with the position of the main worship leader of my church. This was huge for me, since at thirteen, I started serving in that ministry as the song lyrics/transparency girl. Back in the day, we did not have LED screens with words, but an overhead projector that pushed the words to a wall from a transparent plastic sheet that we'd write

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the song lyrics on. But at nineteen, they saw fit to upgrade me. I'd been faithful and moved from transparency to choir, from choir to soprano. Then they let me start playing my guitar and leading songs, and now, I was the worship leader! I was so proud of being entrusted with worship for our church, and I started building the team and bringing in edgy songs that had electric guitars! That first year the team grew significantly, and a true, healthy community was built within the team. This was life-altering in that season, as it was my first real experience with leadership and serving people and growing people in their gifting.

One Saturday, the pastor called a meeting with our entire team and invited us over to a house we'd never been to in a super nice neighborhood. It was fancy. We thought maybe it was an appreciation party, and we were all very excited. As the door opened, you could see a grand piano and crystal features throughout the foyer, and then the pastor asked that we all sit down as he wanted to introduce us to someone special.

We all gathered around the piano, and it was one of those moments that felt like it was in slow motion. I just looked around and saw my team and felt like this was what I was created for: to love people, grow people, and worship God. I was consumed with joy and gratitude, and it was a moment that will live rent-free in my mind forever. The pastor smiled at us all and stood in the middle of the room so we could all hear him. And then, without pause or pretense, he said, "I'd like

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to introduce you to Stephanie; she and her husband own this beautiful home. And as of tomorrow, she is our new worship leader.”

There was no audible screeching halt, but there could have been. You could immediately hear the whispers and voices begin to ask questions.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Could you repeat that?”

“What did he just say?”

“Which one is Stephanie?”

“Is this a joke?”

“Tomorrow?!”

“Chari, did you know this?”

I shook my head no in disbelief. The pastor then repeated the announcement with the same gusto and lack of self-awareness that he had utilized the first go-round. I just sat there in total shock. Stephanie (which isn’t her real name, by the way) looked like JCPenney and 1982 had had a baby, and she was really excited about her new role. So much so that she immediately jumped in to tell us all about the changes she was going to make. My friend immediately stopped her mid-sentence, looked at the pastor, and said, “But what about Chari?” The pastor looked at me like I was an old shoe and said, “She’ll be fine, she did a good job, but Stephanie is your new leader.” Fade into Stephanie jumping back into her dissertation about worship, the changes she was going to make, and

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the inclusion of her grand piano in our sets. I don't remember what else was said because everything went blurry, and I just froze.

The next hour was spent with me sitting there in Stephanie's home, surrounded by my friends, with tears streaming heavily down my face. It was uncomfortable for everyone, especially Stephanie. She periodically would include me in her song ideas and ask my opinion, but I just stared into oblivion. Finally, I raised my hand and said, "Can I go now?" and before they could answer, I stood up to leave. The pastor patted me on the shoulder as I walked to the door, and he said to the group of people still in relative shock, "Don't worry, you'll see her tomorrow." First, he blindsided me with this shift and then he insulted me with his assumption. I was done. And I was thoroughly offended. He had thrown out a transgression that felt like too much to bear, and in response, I picked it up, put it in my pocket, named it, and took it home to knit it a sweater.

Stephanie lasted maybe six weeks. But my being offended lasted much longer. The offense produced anger and bitterness and unforgiveness in my heart. I showed up every week to help the worship experience, not with the zeal for God's house, but to be a middle finger to poor Stephanie week in and week out. I can't imagine how crazy it must have been to have been thrown into the lion's den with us, with no direction, no backing from a team, and the old guard still there

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staring you down from the other side of the stage. I never considered Stephanie's feelings or the team's feelings; I just focused on the injustice of it all. I never considered the pastor's decision or his motivation because, as usual, I always assumed the worst-case scenario. But I'd find out many years later that my inability to unpack motives and see circumstances as growth opportunities would be how offense strong-armed me toward living angry and bitter.

The truth is I was so focused on being hurt that I didn't realize I needed to be shaken a bit. I know now that my passion was being led by me and not by God. And that passion, unchecked, kept me offended. I was holding on to the gift and the position with a closed fist instead of holding on to Jesus. I am a bit embarrassed to admit this, but I was totally zealous for the gift instead of in love with the gift-giver, and that made me dangerous, especially in a worship position, where my worship needed to be directed to God and not the position. How it went down was horrible, offensive, insulting, and just wrong on every level. It was hands down one of the worst leadership decisions and executions of a decision I've ever witnessed or been a part of. But it wasn't the only time that I'd faced that kind of offense in life and in ministry.

Full disclosure, I didn't really learn my lesson, and I didn't surrender my zeal or choose forgiveness for a really long time. And God had to repeat a few of these lessons just to make sure I didn't miss them. But regardless of what God was trying to

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teach me, I lived offended and bitter and angry, and I saw people as the problem instead of an opportunity for me to choose love and experience personal growth. I never saw these moments of offense as a potential pruning of a relationship or position.

But now, with a clear view, I can say without a shadow of a doubt that God was working out how I see offense, how I am also an offender, and how God uses offense on the earth and in the kingdom. Even though I saw each offense as an insult to who I was trying to become or an attack on something I was holding way too tightly, offense on numerous occasions had polluted my passion and motives with unhealthy anger and total bitterness. And sadly, because I didn't learn the lesson at nineteen, I experienced the same kind of relational and professional offenses yet again at twenty-one, at twenty-eight, and thirty-three, thirty-six, and then again at forty, the type of offenses that God was using to teach me to truly see people, and truly see myself through his eyes.

Reality check: offense is going to happen whether you like it or not, but you don't have to live angry or bitter because of it. You don't have to take offense and make it part of who you are or why you act or respond a specific way. You have the power to not allow it to graft itself into your heart and mind and emotions. The biggest lie about offense is that the offense or the offender holds power! But you hold power to forgive. You have the power to see the moment as something God is

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using to grow your zeal and focus your passion back on what grows your hunger, significance, and perspective toward Jesus. And that power lies in understanding why you felt offended and then surrendering your unmet expectation to Jesus.

In a practical sense, this looks like forgiving the person, even if they don't believe they were wrong. Forgiveness isn't a choice when you follow Jesus; it's a command. And forgiveness also doesn't mean you have to bring that person or that circumstance back into your life; it means you are choosing to not allow it to pour a foundation of bitterness in your soul, and you're going to see that person or circumstance as an opportunity for growth and love and move on.

When you're walking in the power of the Holy Spirit and at the pace of Jesus, who forgives and sees people in the right way, you're able to see offense for what it is—a corrupter of motives, a polluter of passion, a reservoir of bitterness and frustration. It's a tool the enemy uses to keep you angry for no good reason. Angry enough to forget solitude, angry enough to quit the wilderness trek, and angry enough to forget your identity. Truth is, most offenses are a golden opportunity for you to unpack others' motives and respond with love. It's also a chance to unpack our own motives and realign ourselves to love. And it's how Jesus navigated offense throughout the Gospels—unoffended, focused on loving people, and showing the love of the Father—that gifted us with a path toward wholeness and healing.

**IF YOU ARE OFFENDED,
UNPACK *THEIR* MOTIVES**

We find Jesus mid-ministry preaching up a storm and dealing with people in the only way Jesus knows how—walking at the pace of peace and patience. And it's not that he hasn't dealt with insult or offense; he has. In Matthew 9, we read that Jesus's methods of fasting are questioned by the disciples of John the Baptist, Jesus's cousin and the guy who baptized him and who is now in prison. His disciples are watching and following Jesus to see what he's doing. They see him preach and heal vast numbers of people and yet they ask him, "What's the story with fasting? We fast and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast!" See, hurting people have a tendency to focus on what you're not doing and miss all the good you are doing. They also bulked themselves up with the religious elite and pretty much said, "You guys are doing this following God thing wrong."

Honestly, questioning Jesus's methods at this point was very offensive, as he is the Son of God. The Son of God whom they, and the disciples of John, probably saw baptized. The same baptism where the heavens opened up, and there were doves and thunder and God's voice spoke: "This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Every bit of their questioning was offensive, and Jesus had every right to feel offended and light them on fire verbally. Yet what we see here is that Jesus kept his focus on the path his heavenly Father

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had laid for him and responded instead with healthy emotions cultivated in the power of the Holy Spirit. He responded with kindness, compassion, and gentleness.

Although he has every right to be offended, Jesus responded with healthy emotions. If you are not responding with Holy Spirit–led emotions, there is a 100 percent chance you have not taken a moment to unpack motives and see the person or circumstance as potentially broken or hurting.

Jesus knew the disciples of John the Baptist weren't motivated by hatred or malice; they were displaced and looking for leadership, as their leader was in prison. Jesus had this innate ability not to get offended, because he was able to unpack motives quickly and with love, and offer peace as a response. And the disciples of John were drowning in emotions, they felt lost, and Jesus, instead of getting offended, answered the question and moved on. His zeal and passion for seeing his Father's will be done were so aligned with his Father's ways and voice that forgiving people's words and assumptions became part of his every day. And we see it again when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath.

IF YOU ARE OFFENDED, UNPACK YOUR MOTIVES

Let me just say that healing anyone on the Sabbath probably felt like giving a middle finger to the religious elite. And

Jesus healed people on the Sabbath several times—not because he was in the business of making religious people angry and walking into holy places with both middle fingers in the air, but because religious people of his day—and still today—will put religious law over walking people toward wholeness every single time. So Jesus was okay that people took offense at the things he did, because he understood their motives as broken and his motives as surrendered passion motivated by his heavenly Father. This does not give you free rein to do what you want and call it Jesus work! The fruit of your life, your words and actions, must align correctly with love and scripture and in a way that brings wholeness and freedom like Jesus did. And Jesus’s fruit he was producing was Holy Spirit–led emotions, and healing and wholeness for the masses.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Along the way, watch out for false prophets. They will come to you in sheep’s clothing, but underneath that quaint and innocent wool, they are hungry wolves. *But you will recognize them by their fruits.* You don’t find sweet, delicious grapes growing on thorny bushes, do you? You don’t find delectable figs growing in the midst of prickly thistles. People and their lives are like trees. Good trees bear beautiful, tasty fruit, but bad trees bear ugly, bitter fruit. A good tree cannot bear ugly, bitter fruit; nor can a bad tree bear fruit that is beautiful and tasty. And what happens to the rotten trees? They are cut down. They are used for firewood. When a prophet comes to you and preaches this or

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that, *look for his fruits: sweet or sour? rotten or ripe?*” (Matthew 7:15–20 VOICE, emphasis added). And so we find Jesus on the Sabbath walking out a life of good fruit, and in a tussle with thorny religious bushes.

The Sabbath was a day that you weren’t allowed to do anything that could have been looked upon as work—which is good, but not when you take something God has instilled for rest and turn it into something religion can use to oppress. In Mark 3, Jesus walks into the synagogue and sees a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees, in all their religious haterade, are watching and waiting for Jesus to say something. These guys aren’t just offended; they are plotting to kill Jesus. They haven’t even given Jesus a chance. His upbringing offends them. His words and actions offend them; his disciples offend them.

And so in this moment, they were appalled that Jesus would even consider healing this man on the Sabbath, right there in front of everyone! Instead of seeing freedom and wholeness as a good thing, they saw it as offensive, and Jesus, the master unpacker of motives, knew it! Jesus knew their hearts, so he bypassed them and called the man with the withered hand over to him. And then he healed! Like his hand unwithered! What an epic moment. And yet the Pharisees, the religious elite, missed the importance of the miracle and the wholeness brought to this man, because they were offended.

When the Stephanie thing happened, I didn’t even take a

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moment to unpack my pastor's motives and see the bigger picture, which was that I needed to refocus my passion on Jesus ASAP! But my immaturity and lack of surrendered zeal fueled my motives, which in return offended the whole room. My response was not to see Stephanie as someone with a withered hand Jesus was trying to bring wholeness to; instead she was someone I saw in the way of my calling and gifting! If you are offended, unpack your own emotions. Jesus's motives were to bring wholeness to this man, while the Pharisees' motives were to corner Jesus into doing something they could arrest him for. We will absolutely find ourselves in circumstances where others have corrupted zeal and motives, but we also will find ourselves offended because we too have corrupted zeal and motives.

Also, let me note here that there will be people in our lives who live offended. No matter what we say or do, everything will feel like a middle finger to their establishment. Just respond like Jesus, and make sure your motives are aligned to good fruit that is cultivated in the time spent with the Holy Spirit. Real talk: you can't be the Holy Spirit for people, which means you do not have the power to change hearts and minds. Only Jesus does. The only heart and mind you can change is your own. The only passion you can surrender is your own. The only words you can change are your own. Focus on unpacking your motives. God is big enough to handle everyone else's motives.

**IF YOU ARE OFFENDED,
TAKE A MINUTE AND REFOCUS**

After all the tussles and potential offenses, Jesus was peopled out and in need of a recharge. Solitude wasn't something he sought once or twice, it was a part of his rhythm, and he knew that to decipher motives and keep his motives pure, he needed time alone. Time with his people. It says in Mark 3:9, after the Sabbath healing, he withdrew with his disciples to the lake to spend time with them and appoint them into ministry. He asked his disciples to have a boat ready to keep the people from crowding him, because everywhere he went the crowds were intense. And everywhere he went, everyone wanted to touch him and get healed. Which, honestly, was invasive and overbearing—as an introvert I would have perceived it as offensive. Like seriously, he needed a minute to just focus on his inner circle. But Jesus understood that when people are desperate, they do desperate things. So he got strategic instead of offended and went away to spend time alone with his twelve friends, not just to hang out but to refocus back on why they were among the people.

He pulled them up that mountain to shift their focus off of all the offensive behavior they'd seen and heard and refocus their hearts back to God and why they were doing what they were doing. Jesus was all about loving the crowds, but he also understood the importance of loving those closest to him. His

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community was a charging station for him, and that community needed to refocus, as these were the guys who would take his stories and his Father's purpose and plans out to the world when he was gone.

When I was offended by the Stephanie debacle, I didn't reconvene with my community to refocus our hearts and minds on the plans and purpose of God. I huddled with my community to talk crap about poor Stephanie, to say disrespectful things about my pastor's leadership, and to plan for how I was going to make my stand that coming Sunday! I was so focused on being good for the crowds that the fruit I began to produce was toxic. But Jesus, when faced with offense, pulled everyone in to make sure they understood the goal and knew the real purpose of why they were out and about among the people. The goal was love—to be love and produce love. The goal was to bring salvation to the world and restore heaven's purpose for humanity, and they could not do that offended.

When was the last time you got away to recenter your heart and mind on the real goal of this life, which is to love, to be love, and to produce love? When was the last time you pulled your crew in to maybe worship together and pray together, and talk through the struggles you have in a healthy way that builds up instead of tears down? You can't produce good fruit in the soil of offense, and taking time to refocus is like pulling out the weeds that have somehow found their way into your heart and mind. Jesus understood this and needed to make

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sure everyone was all good, because the next offense would be a doozy!

IF YOU ARE OFFENDED, DON'T ALLOW IT TO CONSUME YOU

I have to be careful with this story, as it's immaturity's favorite Jesus story. It's the story that people who have unhealthy emotions and no accountability like to reference when they offend the room with their truth and zeal. This story isn't an excuse to flip tables; it's a love letter about how to treat people when you are offended.

Jesus had spent most of the early Gospels teaching and healing the sick, but when the Passover festival came around, Jesus headed to the temple. The same sacred space that initiated his hiddenness and growth at twelve had now become a place of swindling those who had come to sacrifice. "When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money" (John 2:13–14).

A bit of context. This makeshift flea market wasn't inside the temple; it was in the Court of the Gentiles, which was the outermost courtyard and the only area of the temple where non-Jews were allowed. This court was accessible to the Jews,

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Gentiles, foreigners, and the ritually unclean. So these money changers and merchants just set up shop where the unwanted people prayed and congregated. And the money changers, those converting the various currencies to the accepted currency for those needing to pay the temple tax, were cheating people and inflating prices for the people who had traveled from other places to sacrifice and honor God during Passover. They had taken something sacred and corrupted it.

When Jesus sees this space that was set aside for people to pray and instead has been turned into a place where people are being cheated, “he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!’ His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me’” (John 2:15–17).

Some of you will get offended and think the right thing to do is to flip the tables of whichever people or establishments have offended you, but if your table flipping doesn’t bring healing, you’re not working through offense like Jesus did. Jesus in this moment had every reason to be offended. The Matthew account of the temple clearing says after he flipped those tables, “the blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them” (Matthew 21:14).

Jesus flipped the table, but then he didn’t high-five his homies and say, “They had what was coming to them!” Jesus

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also didn't flip the tables, drop a few F-bombs, and tell the money changers that they suck. Jesus did not go and leave a passive-aggressive tweet or meme or Facebook rant on his platform either. If your righteous anger doesn't have a holy landing point that causes others to be healed and experience God's love, your motives need to be checked. You don't understand broken people's motives, and you need a moment to get away to refocus with people who can keep you accountable.

Jesus didn't flip a table because he was consumed by offense; he flipped a table because he was consumed with zeal for his Father's house. A house that was supposed to be a house of prayer. A house for everyone, regardless of religious affiliation or pedigree. A house for all people to experience heaven on earth. He did this because he was the Yoda of motives and understood how to love people on a deep level.

IF OTHERS ARE OFFENDED, STAY FRAGRANT

After the temple clearing, Jesus continues his speaking tour of sorts, as he knows his ministry and life on earth are coming to an end. He's spending more time speaking about the future and trying to prepare his young disciples for when he is gone. Right after the temple, Judas Iscariot, one of the most famous of Jesus's disciples, makes his bed with the religious elite, and the plot to kill Jesus is in play. We don't really hear a whole

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lot about Judas until the last few chapters of the Gospels, and when we do hear about him, he's complaining and offended. Jesus, on the other hand, is unbothered and unoffended by the questioning, the religious leaders, and even the money changers he just kicked out of the temple. Nope, Jesus is focused on the plans and purposes God has set before him. And one of the plans of God was to anoint Jesus a few times before his death. And not just with any kind of oil, but with the type of anointing that kings wore. How epic is this? Jesus walks out his final week smelling like royalty; he was going to walk out the worst offenses that he'd ever encountered to date fragrant with the aroma of heaven.

My obsession with smelling nice is a little unhealthy. I have tons of perfumes, and it's not uncommon for people to give me a hug or walk by me and ask me what I'm wearing, or tell me I smell nice. And every single time it happens, I'm reminded of Jesus and all the times in the last week of his life on earth when he was also incredibly fragrant, metaphorically and literally. The life of Jesus gave off heaven vibes, and it was so fragrant people who were near him wanted what he had and followed him from shore to shore. So it's amazing me to see that in Matthew 26 God shows us this beautiful story of Jesus being doused in rare, expensive, and incredibly fragrant oil set apart for royalty. The Son of God now smelled like royalty, and it set him apart from the rest.

The story kicks off with a woman walking over to Jesus

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with a year's worth of perfume, and out of love and adoration and honor she pours it over his head. To say this oil was costly would be a vast understatement, but she surrendered all she had, her very best, to Jesus regardless of the cost. Also, her sacrifice offended almost everyone in the room who wasn't fully walking at the pace of peace and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus knew it and allowed it.

Why did he allow it, you might be wondering? Well, because Jesus understood that the fragrance he was wearing was a scent that would follow him in his suffering, in his beating, in the garden, and in the crucifixion. This scent was poured all over his beard, and his hair, and it wasn't something he could just bathe away! It was in his pores. It's the scent of a king that he smelled when he was slapped by the Pharisees during his arrest and the scent of kings that he smelled when he was abandoned. Jesus walked through every betrayal in the last days of his life smelling of royalty, and it was a beautiful reminder to stay focused on God's purpose and plan for him when everyone abandoned him. Jesus, covered in the scent of royalty, remained unoffendable because his life was fragrant with love, peace, joy, patience, and everything in between. This may have been a literal dousing, but his life was covered in the scent of royalty, the fragrance of heaven, even without the physical perfume. And it's how our lives should be lived out as well. If you want to fight off offense, then allow your life to be poured out in worship, all the costly things that could offend

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the room, lay them at the feet of Jesus, and when struggle comes, that fragrance will keep you focused and moving forward unoffended!

You can't control offense, but you can control living offended. Jesus combated offense by living a fragrant life of sacrifice and love and surrender. If you want to combat offense, you must surrender your zeal to the plan and purpose of God the way Jesus did. This allows you to see people's motives and respond with love. It also allows you a deep dive into your motives and time that refocuses your heart and mind toward love. It also keeps your zeal producing the right fruit that's consumed with the right thing. If you are easily offended, check what you are passionate about and entrusted with and ask yourself, have I fully surrendered this task or person or passion to God? If you haven't, do it today. Because if you don't, the offense will find you and produce anger, bitterness, and Judas tendencies.

Forgive.

Ask for forgiveness.

Be nice to Stephanie.

Surrender your zeal.

Unpack motives—yours, theirs, everyone's.

Stay fragrant.

Not everyone is out to betray you.

Onward.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chari Orozco (*pronounced Cha-dee*) is an author of books, teacher of the Bible, and podcaster focused on all the feels. She is passionate about sharing the love of Jesus and using her gifts of speaking, writing, and design to impact the lives of those around her. When Chari is not writing or teaching, she can be found reading too many books at once, walking through a museum, and drinking way too much coffee. She also serves with her husband as lead pastors of Hope St. Pete in St. Petersburg, Florida.