

# OVERCOMING OFFENSES, CRITICISM, AND FALSE ACCUSATION

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## INTRODUCTION:

In the context of ministry, experiencing offenses, criticism, and false accusation, has the potential of leading us to great discouragement or to increased maturity in our lives. We must understand the fact that if we are in ministry, offenses, criticism, and false accusation will come. The question is, “How will we respond?” In over thirty five years of ministry, I’ve observed many leaders give up their ministry, and even their Christian walk, because of not being able to endure these difficult tests. On the other hand, I’ve also seen strength of character develop when persons have endured these challenging experiences by the grace of God!

Jesus, great leaders such as Moses and Paul, and many others in the Bible experienced offenses and accusations. We can, therefore, learn lessons from the Bible as to how we can respond when faced with these challenges in our lives and ministry. When confronted with these difficult experiences, God’s grace is sufficient to carry us through to victory! HALLELUJAH!!

## THEME VERSES:

**[All verses quoted in this outline are from the New International Version unless noted otherwise.]**

*“An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel” (Proverbs 18:19).*

*“Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise” (Proverbs 19:20).*

*“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Revelation 12:10-11).*

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Observe biblical and other examples of how offenses come
2. Learn practical steps on how to overcome offenses
3. Learn how positive criticism can be helpful and how negative criticism can be hurtful
4. Learn why false accusations come and how to deal with them
5. Study biblical principles that will help us walk in victory in facing all of these challenges in our lives and ministry

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# PART 1 – OVERCOMING OFFENSES

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## A. DEFINITIONS

1. **To offend (*verb*) means:** “To strike against; to transgress the moral or divine law; to cause difficulty or discomfort or injury; to cause dislike, anger, or vexation; to cause to feel resentful.” (Webster Dictionary)
2. **Offense (*noun*) means:** “The state of being offended; a violation of a moral or ethical code.” (The American Heritage Dictionary) In the context of this teaching, “offense” would imply the first definition-“The state of being offended.”
3. Some observations:
  - a. We may offend intentionally or unintentionally.
  - b. When a person is offended, and they take it in a personal way, it becomes an offense.
  - c. Every Christian should be offended by the sin that abounds around us. What grieves the heart of God should grieve and offend us. However, in the context of this teaching, we will primarily look at the negative impact of receiving offenses. We will also learn how to overcome offenses in a positive way.
  - d. It is possible to offend in the right way. For example, the preaching of the Gospel is an offense to many. Exhortation, correction, and discipline may be an offense to some, but if done with love and a correct attitude, it can serve a good purpose.

## B. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF PERSONS WHO WERE OFFENDED AND THEIR RESPONSES

**Note:** It does not say specifically in these passages that these persons were offended. Many of the situations imply that they could have been offended.

1. Cain was offended that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and not his (Genesis 4:1-16). His response was anger that led to murder.
2. Abimelech was offended that Abraham lied to him about Sarah being his sister when in reality she was his wife (Genesis 20). Through a dream, and because he had the fear of the Lord, he confronted Abraham, but in the end he blessed him.

3. Joseph's brothers were offended that their father seemed to favor him above themselves (Genesis 37:4). Their jealousy turned to hatred that led to selling Joseph to Egypt.
4. The children of Israel were offended with Moses on numerous occasions in the wilderness because of unfulfilled expectations (Exodus 14:10-12). Their offense led to chronic complaining.
5. Miriam and Aaron were offended by Moses wife and also questioned why God spoke only through Moses (Numbers 12). Moses allowed God to deal with their rebellion and interceded on their behalf when they faced the judgment of God.
6. King Saul was offended by the people's praise of David (I Samuel 18:1-16). Saul's jealousy led him to seek ways to kill David. David did not seek to defend himself or fight back in any way.
7. Job was offended by his "comforters." He pours out his laments, but in the end he acknowledges his faith in God (Job 19:25-27).
8. It would appear that Jeremiah was offended by God's dealings with him (Lamentations 3:1-20). However, in the end he recognized the faithfulness of God (verses 21-27).
9. Jonah was offended that God had compassion on Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). Jonah turned bitter toward God and became very angry and discouraged (Jonah 4).
10. Herodias was offended by the message of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12). Her offense led to hatred and revenge. John was beheaded at her request.
11. The Pharisees were constantly offended by the teachings of Jesus (Mark 7:1-13). Their offense of Jesus led them to plot evil against him with the ultimate plan to kill him. Jesus was not offended by their responses to His teachings and constant threats. He kept speaking the truth.
12. The disciples were very offended ("*indignant*") with James and John when they requested to be seated on the right and left of Jesus in glory (Mark 10:35-45). Jesus used the occasion as an opportunity to teach on humility, service, and suffering.
13. The temple guards and religious leaders were very offended because Peter and John were teaching the people about the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4). Peter and John used this occasion to testify more about Jesus and call the church to prayer.
14. The Grecian Jews were offended because the widows were being overlooked by the apostles (Acts 6:1-7). Rather than defend themselves, the apostles made a specific plan of action that resolved the problem.

15. Barnabas was offended that Mark had deserted him and Paul on one of their missionary trips (Acts 15:36-41). Because of deep feelings about this and a “*sharp disagreement*,” they parted ways.
16. What are additional examples from the Bible concerning offenses?

**Summary:** What are some observations regarding these examples about offenses?

1. Offenses left unrestrained lead to anger, resentment, and perhaps murder (Cain, Joseph’s brothers, Saul, the Pharisees and religious leaders, Herodias, etc.).

We should not conclude that these were extreme situations that would never affect us. The standard under grace is much higher than under the law. Jesus said, “*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell* (Matthew 5:21-22).

John writes to the believers and makes some very clear statements about the implications of not loving and holding hate. He says, “*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him*” (I John 3:14-15).

2. When offended, or in a position where we could be easily offended, we can make wise choices (Abimelech, Moses, Joseph, David, etc.).
3. Offenses can lead to complaining and murmuring (Children of Israel in the wilderness, Grecian Jews). There may be legitimate complaints that need attention. As leaders, we must not react with a negative attitude and overlook a legitimate need, even if it was presented to us in a bad way. On the other hand, we must confront heart issues so that persons can grow in Godly character and discipline.
4. Being offended with God can affect even the strongest of persons (Jeremiah, David, Jonah, etc.). It’s good to confess our offense to God, but it’s also important to put our trust in His unfailing faithfulness.
5. In the church there will be offenses (disciples with James and John, Paul and Barnabas, etc.). The key is to recognize the offense, learn from it, and seek a Godly solution.
6. What additional observations do you recognize in these illustrations?

## **C. ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF HOW OFFENSES HAPPEN**

### **In the Church:**

1. When a person is overlooked for a church position that they really thought belonged to them.
2. When a person didn't speak to them or seemed to ignore them in a setting that ordinarily there would be an exchange of conversation.
3. When a person receives an exhortation or correction that doesn't seem fair. Or, maybe it was needed, but it felt like it was given in an insensitive way. Maybe the correction was needed and given in a sensitive way, but the flesh screams out in rebellion against it.
4. When there was insensitive and unfair criticism made of someone's actions.
5. When a person is discouraged and going through a trial and it seems like no one notices. Or, if they do, they don't seem to really care about their situation.
6. When a person has unfulfilled expectations: It could be felt that people should give financial help, encouragement, assistance in some way, or a host of things.
7. When another person is recognized for their accomplishments and this person is not even mentioned for what they thought was a greater work.
8. When a person is honored for their birthday or other important events and this person is not honored.
9. What are additional ways that persons are offended?

### **In the home/marriage**

1. Insensitivity
2. Unkind words
3. Unfulfilled expectations
4. Lack of respect or honor
5. What additional ways can a person offend at home or in a marriage?

## **D. WHAT IS THE BELIEVERS RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING OFFENSES?**

**Note:** In this context we are not talking about the offense of the Gospel. Here we are speaking about practical implications of Christian character.

1. As a believer, in the spirit of love and grace, I will seek to develop a Christ-like character that will be sensitive as to how I relate to others. The fruit of the Spirit will govern my life (Galatians 5:22-26).
2. We must be careful not to offend the weaker person (Matthew 18:5-6). This takes a lot of discernment as to how far one carries this.
3. When we know that we offended someone, and we are responsible for the offense because of insensitivity or wrong attitudes, we must be quick to repent and ask forgiveness (I John 1:7-9). When we don't walk in the light with our brothers and sisters in Christ, family members, or anyone we offended, we build walls that lead to anger, hostility, frustration, and the list goes on.

**E. HOW DOES ONE OVERCOME OFFENSES?**

1. Die to self-will that demands justice for my rights that have been violated (Galatians 2:20-21; Matthew 26-39-22; I Corinthians 15:31). In this last reference, Paul said, *"I die daily."*
2. When necessary, confront the person that offended you in love using the principle found in Matthew 18:15-17.
3. We never overcome an offense by offending the other person in return. In other words, our heart attitude must be right when seeking a solution to an offense.
  - a. There are so many times we will be offended, but the issue is more about God building character in us than our trying to appeal to our own rights.

<p><b><i>"A man's wisdom gives him patience: it is to his glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11).</i></b></p>
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- b. We must approach the person who offended us in a spirit of meekness, recognizing that we may have misperceived ideas or may have been guilty of doing the same thing in our own life. Coming with this type of attitude diffuses the confrontation.
4. It is necessary to understand the principle of forgiveness. God will only forgive us to the extent that we forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15).
  - a. There is no offense too great for Jesus' work on the cross (Isaiah 53:3-6).
  - b. Releasing forgiveness does not mean that we don't confront issues that need to be addressed or that life will automatically go on as before, especially where some great brokenness has taken place. It does mean,

that as a believer, I will release forgiveness by God's grace, and find release for my own soul (Ephesians 4:31-32).

- c. Unforgiveness will lead to bitterness. The writer to the Hebrews says, *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many"* (Hebrews 12:14-15).

Research from the secular medical field reveals that where people are holding unforgiveness, it often leads to physical or emotional sickness.

- d. Where deep issues of offense are buried in ones life, it is vitally important to seek Spirit-filled counsel that can help them release the offenses and find freedom in Christ. The Agape prayer ministry is one very effective way of finding assistance in this area.

## **F. CONSEQUENCES OF HOLDING OR OVERCOMING OFFENSES**

- 1. Consequences of holding offenses
  - a. Hinders Christian growth in a great way.
  - b. Builds walls in relationships.
  - c. Leads to potential sickness-physical, emotional, and spiritual.
  - d. Causes bondage in a persons life that opens the door to all kinds of Satanic oppression including major discouragement, fear, negative attitudes, a critical spirit, feelings of rejection, and more.
  
- 2. Consequence of overcoming offenses
  - a. Experience freedom in Christ that results in joy, peace, love, and more.
  - b. Experience openness in relationships.
  - c. Experience growth in Christian maturity and character.
  - d. Closes the door to satanic oppression, which results in greater victory.

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## **PART 2 – OVERCOMING CRITICISM**

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### **A. DEFINITIONS**

1. Criticize – (from Webster New Collegiate Dictionary)
  - a. (Negative criticism) = “to stress the faults of”
  - b. (Positive criticism) = “to consider the merits of and judge accordingly”
2. It is very important to accept positive criticism, even it hurts a bit.
3. Negative criticism, especially from persons close to us, never feels good. How does one overcome the emotions that go with that?
4. This lesson will look at the value of receiving positive criticism, even if it hurts, and also how to overcome the strong emotional feelings that come with negative criticism. (*How to overcome the strong emotional feelings will follow the teaching on “Overcoming False Accusations.”*)

### **B. SCRIPTURAL REASONS WHY POSITIVE CRITICISM CAN BE HELPFUL**

1. Positive Criticism can prevent us from leading others astray (Proverbs 10:17).
2. Honor comes to the one who accepts criticism (Proverbs 13:18).
3. There will be growth in respect among the wise and a gaining of understanding (Proverbs 15:31-32).
4. There will be growth in wisdom (Proverbs 19:20).

### **C. ADDITIONAL REASONS WHY POSITIVE CRITICISM MAY BE VALUABLE**

Positive criticism...

1. Confronts our weaknesses.
2. Sifts through our motivations.
3. Can lead to the transformation of an unpleasant aspect of our personality or behavior.
4. Helps us to avoid unnecessary mistakes.

5. Increases our potential for success:
  - a. An open mind.
  - b. Willing to listen to new ideas.
  - c. Willing to try new approaches.
  - d. Open ourselves and our methods for appraisal and criticism.
6. Makes us accessible to others.

**D. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO CRITICISM WHETHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?**

1. Decide how I will accept a criticism.
  - a. Will I hold an offense?
  - b. Will I display anger or frustration?
  - c. Will I thank the person even if I feel very ungrateful at the moment?
  - d. Will I ignore it, push it aside, or bury it?
2. Is what this person saying true of me?
3. Another question may be, “Lord, are you trying to say something to me?”
4. Understand the perspective of the critic.
  - a. Are they projecting on me some unfinished agenda from a previous negative experience?
  - b. Are they a hurting person, full of anger and frustration?
5. Defuse the criticism with appropriate words when you know you are unjustly accused.
  - a. “I’m really sorry you feel that way.”
  - b. “Thanks for sharing with me. I’ll have to think about this more.”
  - c. “I’m sorry if you felt I was insensitive and caused you to experience this frustration. Whenever you are ready to talk about this more, I’m ready to discuss this matter with you.”
  - d. “Maybe we are both overlooking something in this situation.”

- e. It is important to not become defensive, even if we strongly feel we are in the right.
- f. If we tell a person that we will think about what they said and get back to them, then we must do that or they will feel we forgot what was said.
- e. How we use our tongue in responding to a negative or unjust criticism is so important. Consider the words of James:

*“Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (James 3:5-6).*

- 6. Be open to the fact that there may be a small nugget of truth (maybe 3%) in what they are saying, even if 97% of what they are saying is not true.
- 7. When criticism is justified, apologize for any offense and make things right when necessary.

**D. FOR REFLECTION: HOW DO I FEEL AND HOW DO I RESPOND TO CRITICISM?**

- 1. What is my response to positive criticism?
  
- 2. What is my response to negative criticism?

**Summary:** Receiving criticism, particularly negative or unjust criticism, is not something we look forward to in our lives. But it will happen, especially to leaders. Our response can be positive or negative. If we don’t receive it in the right way, we will not grow in maturity. If we learn from these experiences, it will be one more stepping stone to strengthening our character in Christ!

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## PART 3 – OVERCOMING FALSE ACCUSATIONS

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### A. DEFINITION

1. Accusation – “A charge of wrongdoing” – (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary)
2. There can be accurate or false accusations. In the context of this teaching, our primary focus will be issues surrounding false accusations.

### B. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS PLUS RESULTS, RESPONSES, AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife. (Genesis 39).
  - a. Result – Joseph was put in prison.
  - b. Response – There is no evidence of Joseph trying to prove his innocence. He lived with the results and was blessed with God’s favor.
  - c. Observations – A false accusation can get us in difficult situations. We must trust that God is in control. Later, Joseph recognized how God used this unjust experience to serve God’s plan to elevate Joseph to a place of authority which led to the physical salvation of the nation and his family.
2. Hannah, in her desperate cry to God for a child, was accused of being drunk by Eli the priest. (I Samuel 1:1-17).
  - a. Result – Hannah bore the insult from a man of God who should have been her comfort, or at least tried to discover the source of her grief.
  - b. Response – Hannah clarified her situation and was then blessed by Eli.
  - c. Observations – Sometimes our best intentions can be perceived as being something totally different.
    - Our reaching out to a person can be perceived as interfering in their business.
    - Our expression of worship or prayer may be perceived as an attempt of wanting to be seen by others.
3. Nehemiah, in attempting to fulfill the vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, was besieged by accusations and threats (Nehemiah 1-6). We will look at some examples:

(1) - (Nehemiah 2:19-20) – Regional leaders accused Nehemiah of rebellion.

(2) - (4:1-5) – Regional leaders were very angry and ridiculed the Jews. They spoke defeat on the project.

(3) – (4:7-9) – Regional leaders plotted to fight and stir up trouble.

(4) – (6:1-14) – Regional leaders use intimidation.

a. Result – Nehemiah faced numerous and serious threats and accusations from a hostile community.

b. Responses – In facing what he did, Nehemiah responded in the following ways:

(2:20) – *“The God of heaven will give us response.”*

(4:4) – Here his response was a prayer; *“Hear us, O our God, for we are despised....”*

(4:9) – They prayed to God and made a practical solution by posting guards day and night. He also spoke words of encouragement.

(6:14) – He prayed a brief prayer to God.

c. Observations – Nehemiah faced each accusation in a different way. Sometimes he responded directly to the person and other times he prayed to God and encouraged the people. In no case did the accusations slow him down. Rather, it made him more determined to finish the task.

-Let accusations be a time of putting our focus on God rather than on the accuser. God brings hope. Satan brings confusion and fear.

-Speaking out fervent and faith filled prayers are a good way to experience a breakthrough in times of false accusation.

-Like Nehemiah, we must carefully discern what is the motive behind the accusation. Is it to threaten, intimidate, or harass? Satan works through people to defeat us.

-False accusation can be a killer of vision! Nehemiah did not allow this to happen. There is no indication that he got discouraged.

-False accusation can be a killer of vision! *YES*, I wrote it twice! It's important to know the strategy of Satan who tries to discourage us from fulfilling our God-given vision. *NEVER GIVE UP!*

4. Jesus was constantly accused throughout his earthly ministry by the religious leaders. They accused him of casting out demons by the power of Satan. They accused him of breaking the Sabbath on several occasions. The final accusations came at his various trials and while he was on the cross as recorded in the various Gospels.

- a. Result – Jesus bore numerous accusations because he was willing to resist the status quo of the religious community and establish God’s Kingdom.
- b. Response – On some occasions Jesus spoke and in others he remained silent. The prophet Isaiah stated, “*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth*” (Isaiah 53:7).
- c. Observations – Like Nehemiah, Jesus was discerning as to when he should respond to accusations and when he should be quiet. He was not motivated in his ministry by the fear of man. He was in total submission to the will of his Father. This meant hardships, misunderstanding from his own immediate family, and Jewish community, and the ultimate rejection of being placed on a cross.

-If we are serious about the work of the Kingdom, we will face accusation.

-Accusation can come from those closest to us.

-When keeping quiet in the context of false accusation, we must do it in a heart of love and not with a negative attitude as a way of fighting back. There are times to speak up and times to be quiet.

5. The apostle Paul was besieged by false accusations in the course of his ministry as an ambassador for Jesus Christ. Here are some of the references:

(1) - (13:44-48) – At Pisidian Antioch, the Jews, who were filled with jealousy when they saw how crowds were listening to Paul and Barnabas, talked abusively against what Paul was saying.

(2) – (14:1-3) – At Iconium, “*The Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.*”

(3) – (14:19-20) – At Lystra, the Jews influenced the crowd against Paul and Barnabas, stoned Paul and drug him out of the city thinking he was dead.

(4) – (16:19-34) – At Philippi, because a slave girl was delivered from a demon, her owners who made money off of her accused Paul and Silas of throwing the city in an uproar and advocating customs unlawful to Romans.

(5) – Additional examples: In Thessalonica (17:5-9); In Berea (17:10-15); In Athens (17:18-21); In Corinth (18:5-6, 12-13); In Ephesus (19:9, 27-28); In Jerusalem and succeeding trials (21:27-28; 22:22; 23:5-9; 29:7)

- a. Result – Paul faced almost constant accusations in nearly every city he went. He paid the price of beatings, stoning, imprisonment, and rejection by the Jewish leaders, people, and government officials.
- b. Response – Paul, in the face of accusation, would often defend his position as a believer. Sometimes he would simply move on to a new territory.
- c. Observations – Paul never drew back in discouragement because of accusation. Like Nehemiah, it seemed to motivate him onward. He was a man with a Divine mission. His mandate was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. He also manifested a dynamic faith in God. Never once do we see him question why God seems to let these terrible things happen to him.

-To really break through into new regions or places held in control by Satan, will most likely stir up opposition and accusation.

-A positive faith in God, believing that He is in control of every situation, enables us to face accusation.

-Being clear about our call and secure in our identity in Christ, will enable us to overcome accusations, no matter how severe they are.

-False accusation can be a killer of vision! Paul did not allow accusation to kill his vision.

-Satan works through people and circumstance to stir up accusation against us. Remember that Satan has been defeated at Calvary! *WE ARE OVERCOMERS BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB!*

**Summary:** From the Bible, we can see that every great leader faces criticism and major accusation. We do not have many examples of leaders who got discouraged when faced with this. There was such a strong sense of call in what they were doing and an uncompromising faith in God that they were able to endure. Rather than feeling intimidated by such strength of confidence in God, it should be a motivation to move us forward in our journey of faith, no matter what offense, criticism, or accusation that comes. “*AND WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD...*” (Hebrews 11:6a).

## C. HOW TO OVERCOME STRONG EMOTIONAL FEELINGS RELATED TO CRITICISM AND ACCUSATION

**Note:** Probably the majority of us feel like we can't fully identify with the five examples listed in the previous point of the outline. That's O.K. However, we can learn principles from them that have already been noted in the observations listed above. It's a fact that many leaders do get discouraged over unfair criticism and false accusations. However, I do believe that God wants these experiences to mature us. Hopefully the following points will help us in our journey of growing stronger and more confident in God in the midst of experiencing these difficult times.

1. Be secure in our identity in Christ – Note Ephesians 1 – We are adopted as sons, secure in our salvation through Christ, chosen, marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit, called to the riches of His glorious inheritance, His incomparable great power working in us, and so much more.
2. Be confident of our specific call in ministry – Do we know that what we are doing is what God wants us to do?
3. Realize that Satan is the “accuser of the brethren” and that he is doing this day and night. He accuses us directly by planting thoughts in our mind that are contrary to God’s will. He also works through people as we have seen in numerous illustrations. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, our testimony, and by full surrender of our lives (Revelation 12:11).
4. Die to self. Jesus said we are to take up the cross. Through false accusation, because of Kingdom work, we are identifying with Jesus Christ and His sufferings.
5. Realize that there is a blessing in receiving accusation. *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you”* (Matthew 5:11-12).
6. Accept the fact that in the last days this will increase for all true believers, especially the *movers and shakers* in the Kingdom of God. We see this in Matthew 24 as part of the signs of the end times: *“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved”* (Matthew 24:9-13).
7. Remember that a diamond was first of all a piece of coal. God uses the pressure of offenses, criticism, and false accusations to shape us into the character of Christ. We have the choice to stay either as a piece of coal or become a diamond.

8. Live in a growing awareness of the grace of God! Paul had a revelation of Grace that enabled him to endure. John says, “*From the fullness of his Grace we have all received one blessing after another*” (John 1:16). Paul challenges us to not set aside the grace of God (Galatians 2:21a). Grace is God’s power that gives the power to endure, wisdom for right perspectives, and joy in the midst of trials, no matter what!
9. **Note:** Additional practical responses to false accusation could be similar to Part 2, point C, in the outline (page 9-10).

## **CONCLUSION:**

Offenses, criticism, and false accusations have the potential of discouraging leaders and getting us side tracked from our mission. Much energy can be used in trying to understand why we have to face these things. While we do want to evaluate why offenses, criticism, and false accusations come, we want to keep our focus on Jesus, “*The author and finisher of our faith.*”

Let’s continue to reflect on the Scripture references given in this outline and allow the Holy Spirit to distill the truths of these Scriptures in our heart. Let’s also further search the Scriptures to learn all we can so that we can stand strong in the hour of great testing. Even in the face of great offenses, criticism, or false accusation, ***LET’S NEVER GIVE UP!***