

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of August 16, 2009
"Surviving Life's Bumps"**

[Life is full of insults and offenses. Even in the church we sometimes experience hurtful words and actions by others. Today's message will show us how to deal with these things.]

[Topics: Insults; Offenses; Forgiveness]

Excerpt: Today's sermon is called "Surviving Life's Bumps". Wouldn't it be nice if we never had bumps in life? We never had any problems with other people. We never got offended. No one ever hurt us.

But when was the last time you were offended or insulted? Notice you weren't asked, "Have you ever been insulted or offended, because there's probably none of us who has not somewhere along the line had one person or multitudes of people say some pretty snarly stuff to you or offend you or insult you in some way."

Pastor Glen said he knows people who don't go to church because they say, "The people there upset me all the time." Well, part of the point of church is that we come together and the Holy Spirit works with all of us. When you're sitting at home all by yourself feeling comfortable, you don't think you need the Holy Spirit working it out with you because it's pretty hard to insult yourself. But when you come to church some one may easily offend you.

Now, here's a story from the life of King David, recorded in **2 Sam 16**, to help illustrate point of being offended. King David was the great king of Israel and had been living in Jerusalem. But his family life was pathetic. And in the process of time, he got overthrown by Absalom, his son.

So David fled Jerusalem and is charging through the hills in the countryside just as he did years before fleeing from Saul. Now a guy comes along named Shimei. And Shimei is cursing at David, insulting him, and telling him what a rotten King he is. He eventually throws rocks and heaps dirt all over David and his company of men with him.

Have you ever felt that way – that someone just threw a rock at you, heap some dirt on you and cursed at you? Well that happens to us sometimes. And life is full of insults and offenses. You get that rude waiter. You get that person in the store that it's like you are inconveniencing them by actually buying something. It's like they're not there to serve you. It's like you're a pain. They're busy doing things and don't want to take the time to take your money. So, it's like you just get the back of their hand.

And life is like that. We run into these people around us and they are offensive in how they treat us. And sadly this happens to us even in the church, because the church is full of people. We can all easily offend each other. Now granted some of us are more easily offended than others.

For example, a woman comes in with a new hairdo and another person doesn't like it very much. She probably has spent \$70 or \$80 to get it done and someone says they don't care for it. So what do you do? If you're not careful, you'll get offended or feel insulted.

Pastor Glen read an illustration this week on sermoncentral.com. It tells of two neighbors who have this beautiful tree between their yards right on the fence line. And there were many wonderful songbirds in that tree. Both men were Christian. One man goes out and sings hymns and the birds join in and there is this glorious singing session.

But the other neighbor goes out too and sings praise songs and the birds also join in with him. The one man doesn't like hymns and the other doesn't like praise songs. So they start throwing rocks at each other through the tree. And before long, the birds all leave.

Sometimes Christians can spend so much time fighting among ourselves that the new people get blown away. We can be discussing and arguing about who is the Beast? Or an aspect about the Millennium, or some picky point of doctrine and some new person just takes a hike, because they get offended by our throwing rocks at each other. We don't want to do that in the church. We want to grow away from that.

Virtually every sport has a referee of some kind. He's the one responsible to keep people from fouling each other. When pastor Glen grew up, basketball was a non-contact sport. Then the NBA came along. They need referees because these guys are killing each other with their elbows. None of you want to be in that game because you will come out hurt and bleeding. It's rough stuff. They have referees to try to keep down the worst of the damage.

Football is the same. They have referees and linesman and others who try to keep the game under control. It's the same with hockey. Now fouls happen don't they? Now a lot of them are unintentional. But some are intentional. The official blows his whistle and the game stops and a player gets pointed out and penalized.

But you know what often happens – retaliation. The feeling is – now I owe him one. A few weeks ago, the Dodgers were playing the Giants and their pitcher just grazed Manny Ramirez's shirt. The ball didn't actually hit him. But that didn't matter. The fact that they threw at him was good enough.

Later in the game one of the Dodger pitchers beamed one of the Giant's batters in retaliation. Now generally in sports if you retaliate you get a worse penalty than the original offense. Once we start retaliating it becomes more vicious.

Now a few days later, another player was beamed on the helmet and taken to the hospital with a concussion. Everybody on the field said it was unintentional. But the manager said that there will be justice. Even though everyone knew it was an accident, they are still going to retaliate.

Now, as Christians, when we interact with others and get our feelings hurt either intentionally or unintentionally, we tend to want to retaliate. Since they insulted me, I'll

wait for the opportunity to return the favor. But is that what God would have us do? Doesn't retaliation magnify the problem?

Now probably some of us are carrying stuff inside our heart or maybe it's gone into our gut now, because of something someone did to us or said to us. Maybe we don't think about it all the time, but if their name comes up in a conversation, then it all comes back.

In some congregations, people won't sit next to each other. Or when you throw a party, you've got to be careful as to who you invite because you can't invite Sam and Fred to the same party because of the problems between them. We need to learn how to respond as to what God would have us do.

Now in **Romans 12**, Paul is talking to the Romans about cooperating with each other and how the different gifts flow in the church that requires cooperation. Then in verse **17**, we read, "**Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.**"

So Paul is saying that there are going to be opportunities where evil happens to you. But, he says, "Don't repay it. Don't let that head-of-steam build up inside you." Maybe some of you have siblings or aunts or uncles or other relatives even including your mother and father where you have a hard time speaking to them because of some incident that has happened in the past. And you'd like to respond in kind.

18) "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Now there's not a thing you can do with a person who is obnoxious and miserable and offended. You can reach out and love them, but that's as far as you can go, because you can't change them. So we need to live at peace with them.

19) "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord." God tells us that he will repay. Leave room for his wrath. Now the wrath of God is where he lets the Holy Spirit do his job. And his job is to convict them of sin and judgment and righteousness. And there's nothing greater than the wrath of God coming into your life and you start really feeling sinful and feeling like you need to repent.

That's the wrath of God working in your heart. The way God repays people is not condemning them forever but rather draws them into a relationship where they have an opportunity to repent.

20) "On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'"

That's how God's wrath works. If you're hungry, he going to feed you. Thirsty? He gives you something to drink.

What does that do to someone who is offensive and you do something good for them? It shocks them. They are usually looking for a fight. But when you do something good for them they don't know how to respond. If that waitress is a little nasty, give her a bigger tip on account of her bad attitude. Doing this is not natural to fallen humanity.

The last phrase about burning coals isn't a negative one. Back in those days they carried burning coals in a container on their head. When one person was out of fire, a kind person would give some of their burning coals to them.

That's how the wrath of God works. God is going to churn in their hearts and work on them. And it may take God a long time until they get to a point where they are cooperative and respond to God. God won't force them.

Now let's go back to the story of David and take a look at his response. Scripture tells us that David was a man after God's own heart. So here's Shimei throwing rocks and dirt on David. And his top aid is saying to David, "Let me take off his head." David had every bit of authority to say, "That's it. He's done. Take off his head." But David in **2 Kings 16:10** said, "**What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?'**"

David is thinking maybe God sent him here to be a thorn in my flesh. Maybe God sent him to make a point in my life and to make me think. We rarely think those thoughts when someone is offensive to us. We just tend to get our pride up instead of thinking – what is God trying to say me?

13) "So David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him, cursing as he went and throwing stones at him and showering him with dirt. 14) The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination exhausted. And there he refreshed himself."

Have you ever been in a family or work relationship where it was exhausting dealing with the other person? It's exhausting because you are forever dodging verbal rocks.

You notice that David didn't respond to Shimei. He didn't let Shimei draw him into the argument. David did not retaliate. He followed the principle that Paul talked about in **Romans 12:17, Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** We need to give goodness and kindness to others.

Let's turn to **1 Peter 2:20. "But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."**

Peter is talking to people who are being persecuted. He said if you are a criminal and get punished, that's what you deserve. But what if you're doing good and get punished or if you are trying hard to honor God and you get persecuted?

Pastor Glen commented on his recent update that he sent out last week about these two young women in Iran. They've been in jail since March and were recently hauled into court and were told by the judge to renounce their Christianity. If they did, they would have been set free right there on the spot.

And they know that most Christians, especially converts, if caught, are being killed there. And they said, "No, we will not renounce our faith." And they are suffering for

doing good. And they may well die for doing good. The judge sent them back jail and told them to think about it for a while. That's suffering for doing good.

21) "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." This verse shoots in the head the so-called "prosperity Gospel" that says God called you to this glorious life with no problems or pain and that you are going to be blessed beyond your wildest imagination. No, we were called to live the life of Jesus, whose life involved suffering, difficulties, and people being rude to him some of the time. They attacked him personally and his religious teachings and beliefs.

22) "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." Jesus never ran off at the mouth even when unjustly criticized. And that's challenging for us not to do, isn't it? It's said that our brain runs 250 times faster than our mouth. So when somebody says something to you, the tendency is for the brain to take off and come up with about 43 nasty things you could say. And you've got to stop yourself and shut your mouth. It's so easy to respond back.

23) "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly." Jesus put himself in the Father's hands who will take care of the situation and deal with people justly.

24) "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." Jesus is talking about how to deal with insults and offenses of life. By his wounds we are healed so that we can be forgiven and so that we can live for righteousness. It's talking about the healing of who we are and how we act and respond to people.

25) "For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." We come to Jesus Christ so that he can shepherd us through those situations. So we've seen how Jesus reacted to insults and offenses. Now let's go to Romans.

In chapter 14 is about the fact that there were Jews in the church that were still keeping days and not eating certain foods. And there were others that were eating food offered to idols. They had these categories of people within the congregation. So Paul is telling them in chapter 14 that they need to learn to cooperate with each other and learn to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit and grow together. They needed to help each other move forward.

Now in **Romans 15:1**, it says, "**We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.**" We're to help the weak and not just turn away from them. The natural tendency is for the strong to want to get away from weak people. The old expression says, "They may pull me down."

Well, that only depends if the Holy Spirit is pulling you up. Are you tuned into the Holy Spirit so that he is lifting you so when you take hold of the weak, everyone gets lifted up. But if you are only walking in the flesh, they might pull you down.

2) "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up."

Remember this is in the course of some difficult issues in the church. For example, as we've been teaching Trinitarian theology lately, we've had one or two people just walk out the door and never say boo.

They haven't stopped and said, "Let me discuss with you what I believe." No they don't do that. They just walk out the door. Pastor Glen sends them notes, and e-mails and cards trying to nurture them along. But they don't want to talk. That's frustrating.

On the other hand, we've had several who have written notes and said in pastor Glen's terminology, "I've grown past you." Aren't the strong supposed to stay and help the weak? If one is weak, why doesn't the strong come and help that person grow? We need to realize that we have been called into the body of Christ together, like it or not. And we need to work with one another and challenge each other in a pleasing way.

3) "For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

This is an important Scripture. Jesus carries it for us. He takes it personally. He became flesh as Son of God, Son of man. He did everything in the flesh for us. He was born, he lived, he died, he was resurrected, he was ascended, he took our sicknesses in his body, he took our insults in his life, he took everything for us so that everything would be perfectly accomplished.

He repented for you, he believed for you and he took your insults so that any insult that comes against you comes against Jesus. Remember when Paul is traveling to Damascus and he gets knocked to the ground. And what does Jesus say to him? **"Saul, Saul, why do are you persecuting me?"**

Paul was going to Damascus to persecute Christians. But Jesus takes it personally. Jesus has entered into our lives and so when the insults come, who's taking them? It's Jesus. Pastor Glen is bring this up (even though we are a peaceful church) because we are all human and we wrestle with these things as we deal with others.

When people say things and instead of taking it personally, we can kind of let it bounce off us and say, "Jesus, that one's yours." When Jesus was being criticized, when Jesus was being insulted and when Jesus was being attacked in Jerusalem, he was doing that on your behalf, so you don't have to bear it alone. Isn't that awesome?

So, if you are packing some stuff around with you, if you're carrying some baggage with you, because you've been offended along the way, or you've been insulted and there's someone you won't speak to, Jesus wants you to give it to him so he can carry it instead of you.

God will judge justly. We won't, because we're personally involved. We will think it's righteous indignation, but it's not. It's just anger. So we can give it to him, and he knows perfectly how to deal with it. He knows exactly how to take care of others. He knows the best way to bring them to repentance. Jesus will deal with it justly when we give it to him, because that's how he dealt with the insults hurled at him.

We need to allow Jesus to deal with it. We're not going to send nasty notes or e-mails. It's so easy to fire off a nasty e-mail, but it gets us into such deep trouble. You see this all the time, people who are at each other's throats via e-mail. That not the way Christians should act. We don't need to do that.

What we need to do is to hand it to Jesus and say, "Jesus, you came and took my insults, I'm offering them to you." And so we need to step back and forgive that person and believe in the long run that Jesus will sort it all out. It's not our job to change others. But rather, we need to ask God to change our heart.

So many of us deal with insults and offenses. So we need to release those things that are wearing away at us. If we've got some things chewing on us, release them and let Jesus take care of it.

Key Scripture: Romans 15:3, "For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

General Group Question: How do most people deal with those who insult or offend them? In your opinion, has this strategy worked out for the best? Why or why not?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. Could you share a story about someone who had offended you that has been resolved? Please include what it took for reconciliation.
2. Could you share a story about someone you have offended that has been resolved? Please include what it took for reconciliation.
3. Did king David seek retaliation on Shimei who threw rocks and dirt on him? What was David's thinking concerning the incident? Do you think it was the best way to handle the situation?
4. Based on Romans 12, how does God want us to treat people including our enemies? Why?
5. Why should Christians not take revenge on others? If not, what should they do?
6. From Peter's letter, what example has Christ left for us to follow? What challenge does this give us?
7. Why is it possible to turn over the insults and offenses we receive to Jesus?