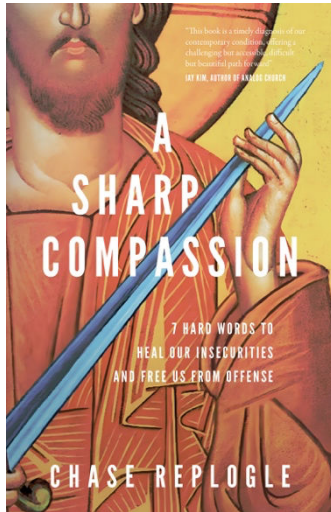


A SHARP COMPASSION

7 Hard Words to Heal Our Insecurities and Free Us from Offense

Why Our Culture is Trapped in Offense and How Hard Words Can Free Us



According to Google, the phrase “I’m offended” has increased usage by more than 5,600% in the past century. Humans have always taken offense, but never have we been so obsessed with it. Offense stunts our conversations and divides our relationships. It infects our families, politics, entertainment, and churches. Yet few seem to be asking why or what it might cost us.

If you trace the offense deep enough, you’ll find a culture and our individual lives drowning in insecurity. For all of our self-help, self-affirming, and self-esteem rhetoric, we can’t seem to overcome it. Just beneath our awareness, our insecurities distort our desires, poison our relationships, and leave us increasingly sensitive to offense. But there is a worse consequence.

Chase Replogle, a pastor and author of *A Sharp Compassion*, believes all this offense is making it harder to hear the truth. It even prevents us from hearing Jesus’s good, but sometimes hard, words.

A Sharp Compassion offers readers a closer look at Jesus’ most challenging words. Through a careful study of the conversations in which Jesus offended, you will discover a savior willing to risk offending you to save you from your deepest insecurities. Those words include:

- **Insecurity:** We live in an age of insecurity in which the institutions, traditions, and religion that once gave us security have disappeared.
- **Obsession:** Insecurity always looks for a solution. Our imaginations search for some hope, some salvation. We find ourselves growing obsessed with it.
- **Imitation:** We find our solution by seeing what others have. These new desires lead us to imitate others and follow their example.
- **Affirmation:** Imitation needs affirmation. We need others to affirm the progress we’re making and the identity we’re expressing. As we crave more affirmation, we become more insecure.
- **Accusation:** When we aren’t affirmed, and our idols fail, we look for someone to blame. We become sensitive to offense and quick to accuse anyone but ourselves.

It takes these hard words for us to see the trap and recognize the pattern of offense. Because God’s love is great, his truths are often hard, and his compassion sharp. But perhaps it’s Jesus’ hard words we need most right now.

Chase writes, “I didn’t write this book to offend you, but I do hope it leads you into a moment of crisis, the kind of crisis that strips away the superficial and allows you to sense again those things that matter most. I hope it reveals your heart’s desires and insecurities, and I hope this book will enable you to better understand the mechanisms at work in your heart. I hope you come to recognize and appreciate the good but sometimes hard words of Jesus. They are, as C. S. Lewis described them, a ‘severe mercy,’ or, in the words of T. S. Eliot, a ‘sharp compassion.’”

For more info, or to take the Offended Assessment, visit: www.asharpcompassion.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

CHASE REPLOGLE has been the pastor of Bent Oak Church in Springfield, Missouri for almost ten years. He is the host of Pastor Writer podcast (www.pastorwriter.com). He holds a degree in Biblical Studies from The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and a D.Min. in The Sacred Art of Writing from Western Theological Seminary. His work has been featured on Good Morning America, Christianity Today, and the Gospel Coalition. A native of the Ozark woods, he enjoys being outdoors with his wife and two kids. His website is www.pastorwriter.com

Product Details:

ISBN: 979-8990873209

Format: Trade Paperback

Release Date: September 10, 2024

SRP: \$14.99

Chapter Highlights:

Hard Words to Hear

Offense: “Get Behind Me, Satan!”

Insecurity: “Why Do You Call Me Good?”

Obsession: “You Hypocrites!”

Imitation: “Who Are You to Ask Me?”

Affirmation: “Woman, What Is It to Me?”

Accusation: “Toss It to the Dogs”

Healing: “You Will Be Offended by Me”

Should We Too Offend?

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Why is our culture becoming more sensitive to offense? How is offense impacting our everyday lives?
2. What are the common ways people respond to offense?
3. What is the Bible's definition of offense? How have our translations kept us from recognizing the importance of this Biblical theme?

4. How is our sensitivity to offense affecting the way we read the words of Jesus? How is our image of Jesus being changed by our modern insecurities?
5. How did Jesus risk offending people? How often does offense come up in the ministry of Jesus? What do you mean that Jesus often risked offense?
6. How does offense begin with insecurity? Where does insecurity come from? How has our modern culture made insecurity worse?
7. How does insecurity lead to obsession? How does insecurity produce new desires in our hearts, and how can those desires blind us to insecurity?
8. How are our desires formed through imitation? How does insecurity lead us to imitation? How does imitation obscure our true selves? Can we live without imitating others?
9. Why are we so desperate for affirmation? Why has so much of our religion been reshaped by our hunger to be affirmed? Why do we often feel like imposters?
10. How does insecurity lead us to accusation? Why are we constantly looking for others to blame? How does offense blind us to our insecurities?
11. How is imitating Jesus the answer to insecurity? How can offense actually lead us to greater self-knowledge and knowledge of Christ?
12. Should we avoid offending others? How should Christians steward the offense of Jesus? When was Jesus willing to risk offense, and when did he avoid it?

NOTABLE QUOTES:

I want to suggest something to you that will sound both strange and possibly offensive, especially given our cultural moment. But I am convinced it is true—convinced by both my past experiences and by the consistent witness of Scripture. If you are willing to endure being offended and honestly look at it, what offends you can reveal important characteristics about you. Offense can be a form of revelation. It can shock you into seeing things you’ve overlooked about yourself. Understanding what offends you can even lead you to a deeper faith in Christ. But it will require a willingness to confront Christ’s hard words and not to be offended by them. (pg. 21-22)

I’m not suggesting we rework Jesus into a swaggering, cursing, ill-tempered brawler, as some have attempted to do. We can’t put words in Jesus’s mouth, but neither should we take them away. The temptation is to try and make Jesus just one thing. We must instead do the much harder work of holding together both images of Christ. He is peaceful, loving, gentle, and lowly, and he is also confrontational, frank, and sharp with rebuke. (pg. 28)

I didn’t write this book to offend you, but I do hope it leads you into a moment of crisis, the kind of crisis that strips away the superficial and allows you to sense again those things that matter most. I hope it reveals your heart’s desires and insecurities, and I hope this book will enable you to better understand the mechanisms at work in your heart. I hope you come to recognize and appreciate the good but sometimes hard words of Jesus. They are, as C. S. Lewis described them, a “severe mercy,” or, in the words of T. S. Eliot, a “sharp compassion.” (pg. 32)

Before Christ is the way, he is an obstacle, the rope stretched taut between the trees. He is the salvation that knocks us off our feet and breaks our stride toward destruction. This world does

not need more offense. God forbid I contribute to it. But this world does need Christ. You need Christ. And Christ acknowledged that he would cause many to be offended. Knocked down by Jesus, we will either harden our offense or be transformed by it. (pg. 48)

The truth is, to be human, at least an honest one, is to be insecure. We are vulnerable. We live each day in these bodies of flesh, ready to be pierced, popped, and drained of life from an endless line of threats. We are left to worry about everything from the microscopically invisible flesh-eating amoeba to the catastrophic planet-killing asteroid. For all of humanity's advancements, we still worry about weather, disease, war, and hunger. Not to mention the insecurities of a receding hairline, expanding waistline, and ballooning credit card debt. Of course, we're insecure. Humanity is plagued by vulnerability. (pg. 56)

So, as the serpent has done since the garden, a voice whispers to us both an insecurity and a solution. The insecurity? You are living a diminished life. You haven't truly found yourself. With its traditions and obligations, this world is holding you back from who you could be. And so, the idol is also planted. Our imaginations are encouraged to abandon any external expectation or wisdom. We're told to close our eyes and imagine whatever our hearts desire. Our salvation will be having the courage to pursue that. (pg. 96)

For all our talk about our heart's desires, we seem awkwardly ill-informed about where desire comes from and suspiciously confident that our hearts can be trusted. We live in a world that laughs at the idea of an external god who can speak, but we somehow find it perfectly plausible that each of us has an inner voice that guides us toward a truer version of ourselves. We think what our hearts want makes us unique. We trust desire to define our identity. But what if desire is just another form of hopeless imitation? (pg.109)

We need to recover the offense of Christ and his gospel not as some weapon to wield against our lost culture. We need the offense of Christ to rescue us from ourselves and from the insecurity and affirmation that distorts desire. We need his offense to save us from the self-absorbed religious lives we're prone to collapse into. We need Jesus to offend us so that he might save us. And that is exactly what he came to do. (pg. 138)

Working our insecurities, desires, and disappointments into a crescendo of conflict and accusation, Satan uses his tools to keep us blind and obsessively stumbling over the offense of another. It is how Satan always works and continues to work today. Satan poisons our ability to receive from God by whispering his accusations of blame. "Someone is keeping you from it." "Someone is getting what you deserve." "Someone is blocking your progress." "Your problem is out there; it's them." (pg. 161)

Make no mistake: the word of Christ is a blade. A blade sharp enough to cut and divide. Perhaps one of its greatest risks is those who try to wield it without first acquiring the wisdom needed to understand it. How do you acquire such wisdom? The last person prepared to wield the offense of Christ is the person who has not faced it themselves. He who wields Christ's sword must first be cut by it before he is ready to raise it to another. (pg. 197)

REVIEWS:

“Through a careful look at some of Jesus’s most challenging conversations, Chase helps us better understand the trap of offense and how Jesus can rescue us from it. Like a skilled surgeon, Chase uses Jesus’s words to dissect our lives, helping us recognize the insecurity and idolatry that often leads us to envy and offense. Jesus loves us enough to be honest with us. For those willing to listen, his hardest words also turn out to be some of his best. With Chase’s usual mix of history, psychology, and literature, *A Sharp Compassion* is a fascinating and sober read. For those willing to take the journey, you’ll learn and certainly be changed.”

Mark Batterson: lead pastor of National Community Church; *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Circle Maker*

“Good therapists know how to be warm, compassionate, and empathetic. But they also know when to be challenging and confrontive if that preferred approach is not working. Jesus was a good therapist. And Chase Repogle is also a good clinical theologian, and an engaging writer. In this wonderfully transparent book, he examines some of Jesus’s own words of “sharp compassion” to help the reader find a more examined and free way to live, and to love.”

Gary W. Moon, M.Div., Ph.D. Founding Executive Director Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center, and current director of *Conversatio Divina*, at Westmont College and author of *Apprenticeship with Jesus*, and *Becoming Dallas Willard*.

“In our desperate search for comfort, the temptation to minimize, neutralize, or distort the cross looms large for Christians navigating the fragility of our own shortcomings. But the cross is offensive. As Chase Repogle reminds us, ‘the cross is the singular offense we must not lose, for it frees us from all other offenses.’ *A Sharp Compassion* is a timely diagnosis of our contemporary condition, offering a challenging but accessible, difficult but beautiful path forward, away from suffocating fragility, toward a spacious and free life.”

Jay Y. Kim, Pastor and Author

“Leaders know too often the dangers of offense and envy, and Chase shines a new light on the topic and helps us break free from its trap. This book unpacks some of Jesus’s most difficult truths with a fresh perspective. Take heart the words of Jesus—read this book and learn its lessons!”

Brad Lomenick, Leadership consultant, speaker, founder of BLINC, and author of *The Catalyst Leader* and *H3 Leadership*

“*A Sharp Compassion* is a needed and timely word for today. By unpacking Jesus’ encounters with others, Chase leads the reader down a path that demands introspection. In a world where we go out of our way to be politically correct, this book will show you that Biblical correction is not only necessary—it’s something to be grateful for.”

Lauren Vander Laden, author of *I Want to Move On*

“In a highly polarized society, it can seem like most Christians either feel a moral obligation to cause offense as often as possible (especially online), or are convinced that any offense is

automatically unbiblical and wrong. In *A Sharp Compassion*, Chase Replogle finds the biblical thread that doesn't let either side off the hook but brings the offense of the gospel into a sharper, more Christlike focus."

Karl Vaters, author of *De-sizing the Church*, Founder of *Helping Small Churches Thrive* at KarlVaters.com