

Cultivate Reflection Guide

New Voices: Easily Offended – John Bevere Week of July 26, 2020

If you missed this weekend's messages, watch at cultivate.sc/discussion

Who you listen to matters. This summer, Pastor Matt has invited friends and fellow pastors to lend their voices and share their perspectives. As we begin this new series and many community groups resume meeting, we've updated our reflection guide to include opportunities for you to cultivate God's word in community and/or continue to respond through daily personal reflection. The choice is yours!

1. Noteworthy: Be REAL with self - how were you challenged in your thoughts or ideas about offense? Be REAL with God about anything you're questioning, feeling or thinking vs. what the teaching and scripture instructed. Ask God to show you what He wants you to hear or even how He is leading you to respond.

2. Cultivate Wholeness: There is no doubt that betrayal and offense create wounds in our life. However, if those wounds are not properly treated, they will not properly heal. Healing is a marathon, not a sprint, but Jesus is our Great Physician and there is no one more acquainted with wounds than Him. He was gravely wounded and gave up His life SO THAT we might live whole and healed.

“He bore the punishment that made us whole; by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5 CEB

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8 ESV

“I have committed myself to maintaining a clear conscience before God and with all people.” Acts 24:16 CEB

You can't control how others respond to God, but YOU can be REAL with Him. Ask God to reveal the wounds YOU need healed. Consider any sin – bitterness, pride, resentment, hate, anger and offense – you are excusing in your life because you're holding onto sin against you. Confess and pray, asking God to begin the healing process in you. Invite Him to show YOU how to maintain that clear conscience, then commit to cultivating that wholeness in your life.

Cultivate Community: On the journey to healing, we need people we trust to point out our blind spots. Be REAL with others - share your hope for healing with your community group or someone you trust. Invite them to speak into your life and share how you can grow. Ask them to pray for you.

3. Read Matthew 5:43-48. Relational conflict can be complicated, but Jesus is quite clear. We are not called to respond to offense like common culture, but like children of God. Offense and obedience cannot coexist in our life.

- What is your initial “gut” response to these verses?
- Does anyone come to mind that you need to pray for? John encouraged us to begin with a one sentence prayer of blessing. Could you start there? If not, what is keeping you from doing what Jesus is asking? Begin by praying for God to heal you, then work your way up to praying for others.
- John challenged us that unrealistic expectations of others can often lead to offense. As you consider any relational conflict in your life, how could managing your expectations change your perspective?

4. Praiseworthy: John challenged us to build ourselves up to where we cannot be offended. Cultivating God's word into our life every single day is one of the best ways to build up those spiritual muscles. Read *Psalms 119:1-3*. What is the byproduct of being in God's word? How could that protect you from offense? Ask God to help you cultivate that characteristic into your life by committing to be in His word.

Dig Deeper: Psalm 119 has 176 verses packed full of the purpose, promise and peace we find from following God's instructions. If you're looking to exercise your spiritual muscles, commit to reading a verse or two a day. You can even work on memorizing the verses that really speak to you!

5. Grace Day: Use today to process & pray. Offense is not easy to overcome, but it is vital to living in the freedom and peace that Jesus purchased for us with His life. Reflect on what you've been forgiven of and ask Jesus to remind you of His love and grace that covers your sins. Let Him search your heart and break down any walls you've built so that you can pursue healing & wholeness.