

PREFACE

The book you hold is quite possibly the most important confrontation with truth you'll encounter in your lifetime. I can say this with confidence, not because I've written it, but because of its subject matter. The issue of offense—the very core of *The Bait of Satan*—is often the most difficult obstacle an individual must face and overcome.

The disciples of Jesus witnessed many great and notable miracles. They watched in amazement as blind eyes were opened and the dead were raised. They heard Jesus command a life-threatening storm to stillness. They saw thousands fed by the miracle of multiplication of a few loaves and fish. The list of Jesus's miracles and wonders was so inexhaustible that, according to the Bible, the world of books could not contain it.

Never before had mankind witnessed the miraculous hand of God in such an overwhelming and tangible way. Amazed and awed as the disciples were, it was not these miracles that pushed them to the brink of doubt. No, that challenge would come later toward the end of Jesus's earthly ministry. Jesus had instructed His disciples, "If your brother sins against you . . . seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." Their immediate response to Him was, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:3–4). The miracles had not inspired a cry for greater faith, or for the raising of the dead, or for a calmed sea; but the simple command to forgive those who have wronged you!

Jesus said, "It is impossible that no offenses should come" (Luke 17:1). It is not a question of opportunity to be offended, but what

your response will be. It is an unfortunate fact that, not some, but many are offended and held captive.

It has been more than fifteen years since this book was launched. In this time period we've received countless letters and numerous testimonies of individual lives, families, and ministries that have been healed and transformed by the truths from the Word of God contained in this book. We have included a sampling for your encouragement. For all of them, we rejoice and give God all the glory!

One leader shared, "Our church was in the middle of a huge split. It looked hopeless. I gave a copy of *The Bait of Satan* to every elder. The split was diverted, and we are one today!"

Many marriages have been saved. Recently after speaking in Nebraska, a couple approached me. The wife confessed, "I was offended ten years ago by the leaders in this church. I became bitter and suspicious, constantly defending myself and my position. My marriage suffered from my anguish, and my husband was in the process of divorcing me. He was unsaved and wanted nothing to do with the church. Someone put a copy of *The Bait of Satan* in my hands. I read it and, within a short time, was completely set free from offence and bitterness. When my husband saw the changes in my life, he surrendered his life to the lordship of Jesus Christ and stopped the divorce proceedings." The husband stood by his wife, smiling. When she had finished sharing, he affirmed the wonderful changes in this life and home!

The testimony that touched my heart the most occurred when I ministered in Naples, Florida. Just before I spoke, a burly, middle-aged man stood up before the congregation and wept as he relayed his tragic story: "All my life I have felt like there was a wall between me and God. I would attend meetings where others sensed

God's presence, while I watched detached and numb. Even when I prayed there was no release or presence. Several weeks ago I was handed the book *The Bait of Satan*. I read it in its entirety. I realized I had taken Satan's bait years ago. I hated my mother for abandoning me when I was six months old. I realized I had to go to her and forgive. I called and spoke with her for only the second time in thirty-six years. I cried, 'Mom, I have held unforgiveness toward you all my life for giving me away.' She began to weep and said, 'Son, I have hated myself for the last thirty-six years for leaving you.'"

He continued, "I forgave her, and she forgave herself; now we are reconciled."

Then came the exciting part. "Now the wall that separated me from God's presence is gone!"

At this point, he just completely lost it and wept. He struggled to get these last words out, "Now I cry in the presence of God like a baby."

I know the strength and reality of that captivity. I had been held hostage to its numb torment for years. This book is not a theory; it is Clod's Word made flesh. It brims with truths I have personally walked through. I believe it will strengthen you. As you read, ask the Master to increase your faith! As you grow in faith, He will receive glory and you shall be filled with joy! May God richly bless you.

—JOHN BEVERE

INTRODUCTION

ANYONE WHO HAS TRAPPED ANIMALS KNOWS A TRAP NEEDS one of two things to be successful. It must be hidden, in the hope that an animal will stumble upon it, and it must be baited to lure the animal into the trap's deadly jaws.

Satan, the enemy of our souls, incorporates both of these strategies as he lays out his most deceptive and deadly traps. They are both hidden and baited.

Satan, along with his cohorts, is not as blatant as many believe. He is subtle and delights in deception. He is shrewd in his operations...cunning and crafty. Don't forget he can disguise himself as a messenger of light. If we are not trained by the Word of God to divide rightly between good and evil, we won't recognize his traps for what they are.

One of his most deceptive and insidious kinds of bait is something every Christian has encountered—offense. Actually, offense itself is not deadly—if it stays in the trap. But if we pick it up and consume it and feed on it in our hearts, then we have become offended. Offended people produce much fruit, such as hurt, anger, outrage, jealousy, resentment, strife, bitterness, hatred, and envy. Some of the consequences of picking up an offense are insults, attacks, wounding, division, separation, broken relationships, betrayal, and backsliding.

Often those who are offended do not even realize they are trapped. They are oblivious to their condition because they are so focused on the wrong that was done to them. They are in denial. The

most effective way for the enemy to blind us is to cause us to focus on ourselves.

This book exposes this deadly trap and reveals how to escape its grip and stay free from it. Freedom from offense is essential for every Christian because Jesus said it is impossible to live this life and not have the opportunity to be offended (Luke 17:1).

In churches across America and in other nations where I have preached this message, over 50 percent, of the people have responded to the altar call. Although this is a high response, it still is not everyone. Pride holds some people back from responding. I have seen people healed, set free, filled with the Holy Spirit, and received answers to prayers when they are released from this trap. They usually report that they have sought for years what they received in a moment, once they were free.

In the last part of the twentieth century, knowledge has greatly increased in the church. But even with this increase, it seems we have experienced more division among believers, leaders, and congregations. The reason: Offense is rampant from a lack of genuine love. "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies" (1 Cor. 8:1). So many are snared in this deceptive trap that we have almost come to believe it is a normal way of life.

Before the return of Christ, however, true believers will be united unlike anything in the past. I believe that today countless men and women will be released from this trap of offense. This will be one of the main links in seeing revival sweep this nation. Unbelievers will behold Jesus through our love of one another where they had been blinded to Him before.

I do not believe in writing a book just to write one. God has burned this message into my heart, and I have seen its fruit remain. One pastor said to me after a service in which this message was preached, "I have never seen so many set free at one time."

God has spoken to my heart that this is only the beginning. Many will be set free, healed, and restored as they read this book and obey the Spirit's prompting to them. I am believing as you read the words on these pages that the Teacher and Counselor will apply them personally to you. As He does, this revealed word will bring a great liberty to your life and ministry.

Let's pray together as you begin:

Father, in the name of Jesus, I ask that You would reveal, by Your Spirit, Your Word to me as I read this book. Expose any hidden areas of my heart that have hindered me from knowing You and serving You more effectively. I welcome the conviction of Your Spirit and ask for Your grace to carry out what You desire of me. May I come to know You more intimately as a result of hearing Your voice through reading this book.

DECLARATIONS

I refuse to be trapped when the enemy's bait of offense tries to ensnare me in its grip by filling my heart with bitterness, jealousy, or envy (Luke 17:1).

Satan, you are the enemy of my soul, and I refuse to allow you to ensnare me in your hidden and baited trap of offense against my brothers and sisters in Christ.

I recognize Satan's crafty attempt to disguise himself as a messenger of light in my life. I will allow the Word of God to divide rightly between, good and evil, ensuring that I will not become trapped by Satan's disguise.

I will avoid division among my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ by filling my heart with Christlike love for others (1 Cor. 8:1).

I refuse to produce the fruit of hurt, anger, outrage, jealousy, resentment, strife, bitterness, hatred, and envy in my life. The power of God's Spirit at work in my heart will keep the fruit of offense out of my life.

Holy Spirit, destroy every shred of pride in my life, and do not allow it to keep me from being healed, set free, and filled with Your power.

I am committed to helping unbelievers who have been blinded by the enemy to behold Jesus through our Christlike love of one another.

Father, make me a conduit of the Holy Spirit's power, flowing into the lives of others to set them free, heal, and restore them through Your love.

Holy Spirit, be my teacher and counsellor so that Your revealed Word will continue to bring great liberty to my life and ministry.

Father, I want to continue to always grow into a more intimate relationship with You. Expose the areas of my life that hinder me from being Christlike, and cause my life to reflect the character of my precious Savior and Lord.