

Each chapter is designed to be comprehensive, providing key insights, scriptural references, and practical applications for church leaders and congregants.

# Introduction

In the Apostolic Pentecostal faith, the church is not merely a gathering of Apostolic Pentecostal Jesus Name believers; it is a sacred community designed for spiritual growth, healing, and unity. However, certain spirits can threaten this harmony, particularly sympathetic spirits that carry offense and division. This book aims to equip Apostolic Pentecostal church leaders and members with the knowledge and tools to identify and address these spirits, fostering a healthy and vibrant church environment.

# Chapter 1 Understanding Sympathetic Spirits

Definition and Characteristics

Sympathetic spirits are emotional influences that thrive on turmoil and discord. They often manifest through behaviors such as gossip, criticism, divisiveness, being self-centered and defensiveness. These spirits can subtly undermine the unity of the church and lead to significant strife among members.

## **Biblical Examples**

Consider the story of Miriam and Aaron in Numbers 12. Their offense against Moses, stemming from jealousy and pride, led to God's judgment. This illustrates how sympathetic spirits can disrupt not just individual lives but the entire community.

#### **Recognizing Symptoms**

Common symptoms of sympathetic spirits include:

- Gossiping: Sharing negative information about others, often exaggerating or misrepresenting facts.
- Forming Cliques: Creating exclusive groups that exclude others, fostering division.
- A Critical Attitude: Constantly finding fault with church leadership, programs, or fellow members.

- Have you noticed any of these behaviors in your church?
- How can you address them constructively?

# Chapter 2 The Spirit of Offense

The Nature of Offense

Offense can take root in the heart, leading to bitterness and resentment. Proverbs 18:19 states, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city." This highlights the difficulty of reconciling with someone who has been hurt.

**Biblical Teachings on Forgiveness** 

Jesus emphasizes forgiveness in Matthew 6:14-15, teaching that our forgiveness from God is contingent upon our willingness to forgive others. This principle is fundamental for maintaining unity in the church.

Practical Steps to Address Offense

1. Encourage Open Communication: Create safe spaces for members to express their feelings. This could be through small group discussions or pastoral counseling.

2. Promote Accountability: Encourage individuals to take responsibility for their actions. Implement a culture where members feel comfortable admitting their mistakes.

3. Teach Conflict Resolution: Offer workshops focused on biblical conflict resolution strategies, equipping members to handle disagreements constructively. Here's an expanded discussion of notable figures in the Old Testament who struggled with accepting rebuke or correction, along with a more detailed exploration of their stories and the implications of their actions:

1. King Saul

• Background: Saul was the first king of Israel, chosen by God through the prophet Samuel. He initially displayed humility and reliance on God.

• Rejection of Rebuke: Saul's downfall began when he disobeyed God's command to completely destroy the Amalekites and their possessions (1 Samuel 15). When confronted by Samuel, Saul made excuses and attempted to justify his actions, claiming he saved the best livestock for sacrifices to God. His inability to accept the gravity of his disobedience led to God rejecting him as king.

• Consequences: Saul's failure to accept correction resulted in a series of tragic events, including his mental deterioration, jealousy of David, and ultimately his death.

2. King David (in the case of Bathsheba)

• Background: David is often described as "a man after God's own heart." However, he was not without flaws.

• Rejection of Rebuke: David's sin with Bathsheba and the arranged death of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11) exemplifies a moment where he ignored moral boundaries. When Nathan the prophet confronted him (2 Samuel 12), David initially did not recognize the severity of his sin until Nathan told him a parable that revealed his wrongdoing.

• Consequences: Although David repented sincerely, the repercussions of his actions—such as family strife and violence—were severe and long-lasting.

3. King Rehoboam

• Background: Rehoboam, son of Solomon, became king after his father's death.

• Rejection of Rebuke: When the people of Israel asked him to lighten the heavy yoke imposed by Solomon, Rehoboam sought advice. He rejected the wise counsel of the older advisors and instead followed the advice of his peers, leading to his decision to increase taxes and oppression (1 Kings 12:1-24).

• Consequences: His refusal to heed wise counsel resulted in the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah, leading to a weakened nation and significant strife.

4. King Ahab

• Background: Ahab was one of the most notorious kings of Israel, known for his marriage to Jezebel and his promotion of Baal worship.

• Rejection of Rebuke: Ahab repeatedly ignored the prophetic warnings from Elijah, including the confrontation on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18) and the prophecy of his demise (1 Kings 21). Instead of repenting, he often sought to eliminate the prophets who challenged him.

• Consequences: His refusal to accept rebuke contributed to his downfall and the eventual destruction of his dynasty.

5. Jeroboam

• Background: Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel after the split from Judah.

• Rejection of Rebuke: After establishing his reign, Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan to prevent his subjects from traveling to Jerusalem for worship, fearing they would return to Rehoboam's rule (1 Kings 12:26-33). He ignored prophetic warnings against his idolatry.

• Consequences: His actions led to a legacy of sin that affected the entire northern kingdom, resulting in divine judgment and eventual exile.

6. Manasseh

• Background: Manasseh was one of the longest-reigning kings of Judah and is often cited as one of the most wicked.

• Rejection of Rebuke: He led the nation into idolatry, including child sacrifice, and ignored the warnings from prophets (2 Kings 21). His refusal to heed correction resulted in widespread corruption and moral decay in Judah.

• Consequences: Although he later repented after being taken captive by the Assyrians (2 Chronicles 33:12-13), his earlier actions had already caused significant damage to Judah's spiritual state.

7. The Israelites during the time of the Judges

• Background: The period of the Judges was marked by a cycle of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance.

• Rejection of Rebuke: The Israelites repeatedly turned away from God and ignored the rebukes of the judges. For instance, after the death of a judge, they would revert to idolatry (Judges 2:11-19).

• Consequences: This cycle resulted in oppression by surrounding nations and a lack of stability in Israel.

# 8. Job's Friends

• Background: Job was a righteous man who suffered immense loss and affliction.

• Rejection of Rebuke: Job's friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) believed that his suffering was a direct result of sin and offered misguided rebuke instead of comfort (Job 4-25). They failed to accept Job's integrity and the notion that suffering can occur without personal wrongdoing.

• Consequences: God ultimately rebuked Job's friends for their failure to speak truthfully about Him, demonstrating that their unwillingness to accept Job's perspective led to their own condemnation.

9. Pharisees and Religious Leaders (New Testament Context)

• Background: While primarily New Testament figures, the Pharisees represent a continuation of the Old Testament theme of rejecting prophetic voices.

• Rejection of Rebuke: They often challenged Jesus and rejected His teachings, as seen in their response to His critiques of their hypocrisy and legalism (Matthew 23).

• Consequences: Their inability to accept correction

contributed to the rejection of Jesus and ultimately their own downfall as leaders.

# Conclusion

These examples from the Old Testament illustrate a recurring theme of resistance to correction and rebuke. The consequences of such resistance often led to personal downfall, communal strife, and spiritual decay. The narratives serve as cautionary tales about the importance of humility, the willingness to accept correction, and the recognition that rebuke can be a pathway to growth and restoration. The overarching lesson is that accepting rebuke is vital for moral integrity and spiritual health, both individually and communally.

- How can you foster open communication in your church?
- Are there unresolved offenses that need to be addressed?

### Chapter 3 The Danger of Coddling Offended Saints

Balancing Compassion and Correction While it is essential to show empathy, church leaders must also maintain doctrinal integrity. Galatians 6:1 reminds us to restore those who are caught in sin gently, but it also warns against enabling destructive behavior.

> The Role of Fivefold Leadership in an Apostolic Pentecostal Church

The Shepherd must guide the congregation with love while being firm in his stance against divisive behavior. This requires wisdom and discernment.

### **Case Studies**

1. Example of Coddling: An Apostolic Pentecostal Pastor that allowed a member to continuously criticize the pastor without addressing the behavior ultimately faced a split.

2. Example of Healthy Confrontation: An Apostolic Pentecostal church Pastor that addressed gossip swiftly saw a restoration of unity and trust among his Saints

- Are there individuals in your church who need rebuke or reproof or correction?
- How can you approach them in love without enabling their behavior?

### Chapter 4

# Protecting the Flock from Poisonous Influence & Protecting Against a Spirit of Sympathy *Shut the Door on the Spirit*

**Recognizing Poisonous Influences** 

Titus 3:10-11 instructs Apostolic Pentecostal Fivefold Leadership to warn divisive individuals once or twice, and then have nothing to do with them. Identifying these individuals is crucial for protecting the congregation.

**Establishing Boundaries** 

Church leaders should set clear boundaries for interactions, especially with individuals who come from other congregations with unresolved issues.

Practical Application

1. Redirecting Conversations: Encourage members to focus on positive discussions and avoid gossip.

2. Providing Guidance: Direct individuals who come with complaints about their previous pastors toward reconciliation rather than allowing them to spread negativity.

- How can you identify poisonous influences in your church?
- What boundaries need to be established to protect your congregation?

# Chapter 5 Testing the Spirit

The Importance of Discernment

1 John 4:1 teaches us to test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Discernment is vital in identifying whether someone is genuinely seeking healing or spreading division.

Indicators of a Repentant Heart Signs of a repentant heart include:

- A willingness to apologize.
- An openness to correction.
- A desire for reconciliation.

Steps for Spiritual Assessment

1. Checklist for Leaders: Create a practical checklist to evaluate individuals carrying offense. Questions might include:

- Are they willing to forgive?
- Have they sought reconciliation with those they've offended?

2. Spiritual Conversations: Engage individuals in conversations about their feelings and grievances,

assessing their responses for signs of genuine repentance.

- How can you cultivate a culture of discernment in your church?
- Are there individuals who need to be assessed for their spiritual health?

# Chapter 6 The Biblical Example of Shutting the Door

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman

In 2 Kings 4:32-37, Elisha shuts the door when he prays for the Shunammite woman's son. This act symbolizes the importance of creating a sacred space for miracles and healing, free from external negativity.

Lessons from Scripture

Shutting the door serves as a protective measure against negative influences and distractions. Leaders must create environments conducive to spiritual growth and healing.

Application for Today

1. Implementing Boundaries: Encourage church leaders to adopt practices that safeguard the church's spiritual health, such as closing the door on gossip and division.

2. Creating Safe Spaces: Establish prayer meetings and healing services that focus on unity and restoration.

**Reflection Questions** 

• How can you create a "shut door" environment in your church?

• What practices can be implemented to foster healing and unity?

# Chapter 7 The Consequences of Open Doors

Spiritual and Emotional Fallout Allowing sympathetic spirits to thrive can lead to division, mistrust, and emotional pain within the church.

# Historical Examples

Share stories from church history where unresolved offenses led to significant splits or declines in congregational health, such as the division of denominations over unresolved conflicts.

**Prevention Strategies** 

1. Regular Check-ins: Conduct regular assessments of church health through surveys or open forums.

2. Encouraging Transparency: Foster a culture where members feel safe to express concerns without fear of reprisal.

- What are the potential consequences of allowing division to persist in your church?
- How can you proactively prevent these consequences?

# Chapter 8 Cultivating a Spirit of Forgiveness

Creating a Forgiving Culture Colossians 3:13 emphasizes the importance of forgiveness. Leaders should model forgiveness and encourage members to do the same.

Prayer and Healing

Emphasize the role of prayer in healing relationships. Encourage members to pray for those they are offended by and to seek God's guidance in their healing journey.

**Community Practices** 

1. Testimony Services: Hold services where members can share stories of forgiveness and healing, fostering a culture of openness and support.

2. Forgiveness Workshops: Offer workshops focused on the biblical principles of forgiveness, teaching practical steps for reconciliation.

- How can you model forgiveness in your own life?
- What community practices can promote a culture of forgiveness in your church?

### Conclusion Standing Firm in Faith

Call to Action

Encourage church leaders and members to be vigilant and discerning against sympathetic spirits.

The Role of the Apostolic Pentecostal Church Reinforce the church's calling to be a place of refuge, healing, and unity.

# Final Thoughts

In closing, inspire readers to embrace the principles outlined in the book to promote love, unity, and healing in their communities. Remind them that the church is called to be a light in a world filled with division and strife.

# Appendices

- Appendix A: Scriptures on Forgiveness and Unity
- Appendix B: Resources for Church Leaders on Conflict Resolution
- Appendix C: Sample Church Policies for Addressing Offense and Gossip

Read And Obey Acts 2:38

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