

Rejecting Offense, Strife, and Unforgiveness: Rediscovering the Use of the Tongue

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This biblical commentary will generate good discussions in small Bible or home church groups.

Samuel Kioko Kiema's biblical commentary *Rejecting Offense, Strife, and Unforgiveness: Rediscovering the Use of the Tongue* places emphasis on connection and simple teaching and feels refreshing given the current state of world affairs.

Rejecting Offense addresses three main topics: offense, strife, and forgiveness. These topics are broken down, with more underdiscussed religious issues including gossip, feeling offended in church, social media, and bullying.

The discussion begins with the thorny issue of dealing with offensive behavior, arguing that being offended is less about the person committing the offense than it is about the people taking offense; this message might be a hard one to hear, but it offers a place to stand when the world seems unsure.

The section on offense is by far the strongest of three parts because it is the best defended and supported. It also feels the most pertinent for today's divided world. The other main topics discussed—strife and forgiveness—benefit less from the book's method of simple gospel survey and applied biblical advice. A section on forgiveness features a very basic suggestion that places the act of forgiveness largely on the part of the wronged individual; such advice might be off-putting to those struggling to find a place to forgive.

Chapters read like a series of loosely joined sermons, all focusing on the importance of proper Christian speech from a biblical perspective. Following a traditional sermon format, each begins by examining a piece of text, offering commentary, and providing a takeaway message for putting that idea into action.

In building its case, *Rejecting Offense* generally uses the gospels, the letters of Paul, and Proverbs. The words of Jesus are often elaborated upon with lines from Proverbs, to show readers how to take concepts into their lives. These textual readings are somewhat surface, leaving aside issues of cultural commentary, historical analysis, or deep linguistic study, and taking instead a strictly prosperity-gospel approach.

The book uses the King James Version of the Bible, and so its language will be very familiar to many Christian readers. It occasionally glances at the Greek language beneath the text in a tangential, casual way but largely avoids strong biblical criticism that could draw out the Bible's complexities and avoids commenting on the multiple meanings of many words.

Rejecting Offense is an open biblical commentary whose arguments will generate good discussions in small Bible or home church groups.

JEREMIAH ROOD (December 22, 2016)

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