

Scriptures on Causing Offense or Misrepresenting God

1. Jesus on Causing Others to Stumble

“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” — Matthew 18:6

Context: Jesus is teaching about humility, childlike faith, and the value of every believer. Right before this, He says that unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3). The “little ones” are both literal children and vulnerable believers. This shows how seriously Jesus views the harm done by religious or powerful people who abuse trust, lead others into sin, or drive them away from God. It’s not a small matter—it’s catastrophic.

2. Hypocrisy in Religion

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.” — Matthew 23:13

Context: This is part of Jesus’ famous “Seven Woes” against the Pharisees and religious leaders (Matthew 23). The leaders were outwardly religious but inwardly corrupt. They piled burdensome rules on people, sought status, and neglected justice, mercy, and faithfulness. By demanding allegiance to their systems rather than to God, they were shutting people out of true relationship with Him. This is one of the clearest biblical examples of religion becoming a barrier rather than a doorway.

3. Blasphemy by Misrepresentation

“God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” — Romans 2:24 (quoting Isaiah 52:5)

Context: Paul is addressing religious Jews who relied on their heritage, knowledge of the law, and outward signs (like circumcision) but lived hypocritically. Because of this, non-believers (Gentiles) mocked God, associating His name with hypocrisy and corruption. This echoes Isaiah’s lament that Israel’s exile made surrounding nations think God was powerless. Paul reframes it: when believers don’t live what they preach,

they dishonor God and drive others away. This principle still echoes today when people reject God because of how His followers act.

4. Warning Against Abusing Authority

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them —not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” — 1 Peter 5:2–3

Context: Peter is writing to church leaders facing persecution and hardship. His reminder is that leadership is not about power, control, or personal gain but about service and example. This was radically different from the culture of Rome, where authority meant domination. In the church, leadership must look like Christ—laying down one’s life for the sheep (John 10:11). When leaders instead exploit or control, they betray the very heart of God’s design for shepherds.

5. Jesus Himself Rejected by Religious People

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.” — Isaiah 53:3

Context: This is part of Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant” prophecy (Isaiah 52:13–53:12), fulfilled in Jesus. The Servant would be misunderstood, rejected, and considered cursed by God—yet He was actually carrying the sins of the world. Many of those who rejected Him were the very religious leaders claiming to serve God. This prophecy reminds the brokenhearted that rejection by religion does not equal rejection by God. Jesus Himself walked that road.

The Thread That Runs Through These

- Jesus fiercely defends the vulnerable and condemns those who misuse religion to harm others.
- Hypocrisy and power-seeking in God’s name have always driven people away, even in biblical times.

- Scripture makes clear that when people misrepresent God, the offense lies with them—not with God Himself.
- Those hurt by religion are in the company of Christ Himself, who was rejected by the very people who claimed to speak for God.

Scriptures on False Teachers & Misuse of God’s Word

1. Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.” — Matthew 7:15–16

Context: Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, warns that not everyone who claims to speak for God truly does. Some hide under the disguise of innocence but are predatory in nature. The test is not their words or titles, but the fruit of their lives—their actions, character, and results.

2. Twisting the Word for Profit

“In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” — 2 Peter 2:3

Context: Peter devotes an entire chapter to exposing false teachers. He says they are motivated by greed, lust, and pride, not by love or truth. They use people as means to their own ends. Peter assures his readers that God sees and will bring justice, even if it seems delayed.

3. Preaching Another Jesus

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” — 2 Corinthians 11:13–14

Context: Paul is warning the Corinthian church against teachers who were trying to undermine his ministry. They appeared spiritual, but their message and motives were corrupt. His point: just because someone

looks holy or persuasive doesn't mean they're from God. Discernment is essential.

4. Empty Talkers Who Mislead

“For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.” — Titus 1:10–11

Context: Paul instructs Titus, a young church leader, to confront false teachers who were pushing legalism and self-serving doctrines. These teachers weren't just wrong—they were destabilizing families and exploiting people. Paul's counsel is firm: they must not be allowed to continue spreading lies.

5. Itching Ears and Comfortable Lies

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” — 2 Timothy 4:3–4

Context: Paul is writing his final letter, warning Timothy that people often prefer teachers who tell them what they *want* to hear rather than what they *need* to hear. False teachers thrive because they cater to self-interest and avoid truth that convicts.

6. Condemnation of Exploitative Leaders

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! declares the LORD. Therefore... I will attend to you for your evil deeds.” — Jeremiah 23:1–2

Context: In the Old Testament, God often condemned Israel's leaders—kings, priests, and prophets—who failed in their responsibility. Instead of protecting and guiding the people, they scattered them. God promises to hold such leaders accountable and to raise up true shepherds who care for His flock.

The Thread Running Through These

- False teachers often look harmless or even holy, but their motives (greed, pride, lust for power) betray them.
- They exploit the vulnerable, distort the Word, and cause division and pain.
- Scripture assures us that God will deal with them, even if it feels delayed.
- The test of true teachers is always the **fruit** of their lives and whether they point people to Christ, not to themselves.

Scriptures of Remedy & Comfort

1. The Lord Himself as Shepherd

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.” — Psalm 23:1–3

Comfort: Where earthly shepherds fail, the Lord Himself becomes the Shepherd who restores, provides, and protects. This Psalm is a direct counterbalance to abusive leaders — reminding us that God personally tends His flock with gentleness and care.

2. Jesus the Good Shepherd

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I know my own and my own know me.” — John 10:11, 14

Comfort: Unlike false teachers who exploit the sheep, Jesus lays down His life for them. He knows each one personally, by name. In contrast to “hirelings” who run when trouble comes, Jesus is faithful, sacrificial, and trustworthy.

3. God Himself Promises to Shepherd His People

“I myself will search for my sheep and look after them... I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered... I will tend them in a good

pasture... I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.” — Ezekiel 34:11–16

Context: This was written as a direct response to Israel’s corrupt leaders (the “shepherds” who only fed themselves). God steps in and promises to personally care for His people. This is one of the most powerful Old Testament remedies for the abuse of leadership.

4. The Spirit as Teacher and Comforter

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.” — John 14:26

Comfort: Instead of being dependent on corrupt teachers, believers have the Holy Spirit Himself as their guide and teacher. Even if human leaders fail, the Spirit remains faithful to lead into truth.

5. Healing from Wounds Caused by Others

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” — Psalm 147:3

Comfort: Many who have been hurt by religion carry deep emotional and spiritual wounds. God promises healing, not dismissal. He does not minimize the pain but draws near to mend what was broken.

6. Invitation to Rest in Christ

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” — Matthew 11:28–29

Comfort: This is Jesus’ direct invitation to those crushed by religious burdens or human expectations. Where others are harsh, He is gentle. Where others add weight, He brings rest.

7. God’s True Word Brings Life

“The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.” — Psalm 19:7–8

Comfort: Unlike the twisted words of false teachers, God's true Word is life-giving, refreshing, and trustworthy. It restores joy rather than robbing it.

The Thread of Comfort

- Where false shepherds exploit, God Himself shepherds.
- Where leaders scatter, Jesus gathers.
- Where words have been twisted, the Spirit teaches truth.
- Where religion has wounded, God heals.
- Where people have rejected, Jesus invites with gentleness.