

Being Offended

Are you finding yourself feeling offended more and more each day? Many people are. Today we are going to discuss being offended.

Earlier this week I was reading a story on social media about a neighbor who had been “verbally assaulted” by someone else as they walked in a city park. I don’t know exactly what transpired or was really said, but the fact of the matter is this neighbor felt very offended that someone would just walk up to them in a city park and start lecturing them about a choice they had made. Some would say the neighbor had every right to be offended. We may have the right to be offended, but should we be offended?

To talk about being offended, we must understand that it is an emotional response. This emotional response is typically to an action, words, or sight of someone or something else. We can take offense over language someone uses in public or what someone wears. We can take offense to the stance someone takes politically or socially. We can even be offended by the way a person behaves, especially in public. In other words, being offended is an emotional response because our feelings or sensibilities have been hurt.

Look at what Proverbs 19:11 says:

Proverbs 19:11

(11) A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.

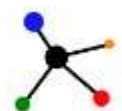
In my personal life, I have found that I am more easily offended when my patience is wearing thin. I stop thinking from a Christian perspective and start thinking from a personal perspective. This proverb tells us that our wisdom helps us maintain our patience and thus not take offense. We must learn to keep our perspective focused from a Christian worldview. We must be putting Christ first in all we say, do, and feel.

None of us are perfect. We all take offense from time to time because of something. Sometimes this offense can come from uncommunicated expectations or it can come from deep-seated hurts in our own past that we have not given over to the Lord and moved from. These are typically the case when it is a friend or family member who offends us. Sometimes the offense we take comes from what we see or hear in public. These are the things we have little to no control over, like the foul language in public or obscene display in public on someone’s clothing or on a sign. Whatever the source, we all from time to time get offended.

When you find yourself getting offended, there are a few Bible verses that we recommend you recall and meditate on. The first is Matthew 5:38-42.

Matthew 5:38-42

(38) "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' (39) But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. (40) And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. (41) If anyone forces you to



go one mile, go with them two miles. (42) Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Jesus is teaching us that it is more important to give to others than seek justice. One of the things that you can be offended by is the lack of justice in a situation. You feel taken advantage of or sinned against and you want justice or worse, you want to retaliate or seek revenge. The eye for an eye and tooth for tooth that Jesus was referring to was a legal tradition in the day to bring justice. It is still practiced in some fashion in courts around the world today. Most often the justice extracted for a victim is money from the offender or jail time for the offender. While this may help deter future bad behavior, it does little to the person who has been offended. Jesus knew that being offended was an emotion and tells us to go even further.

The examples Jesus gives us on this passage of scripture are somewhat symbolic and we need to apply them to life today. The principle he is trying to instill is that we are to give to others without taking offense. This will be a witness of our devotion to the Lord and it will help us to not feel bad and take offense. It all boils down to forgiving people. We must be willing to forgive people for their words and actions without the desire for revenge or justice. The key here is forgiveness.

With forgiveness, we can ask, how many times do I forgive someone for something? Shouldn't there be some kind of limit? Jesus addresses this also in Luke 17:3-4.

Luke 17:3-4

(3) So watch yourselves. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. (4) Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

We must forgive people as often as they sin against us. In another passage, Jesus is asked how many times we should forgive someone, and he says the number of times we should forgive is 70 times 7. Jesus is not saying there is a hard and fast number of times we forgive someone. He was exaggerating to make a point. The person asking him asked how many times we should forgive; once, twice, even 7 times. This was Jesus' response making the point that we should keep forgiving.

When we start to be offended, we must stop and think about what it is that is offending us and start forgiving the other person before they ask for it, and they may never ask for it.

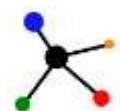
The Apostle Paul gives us instructions on how to relate to each other within the Body of Christ in Ephesians 4:2-3.

Ephesians 4:2-3

(2) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (3) Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Paul was giving these instructions to the church in Ephesus for interpersonal relationships within the church there, but we believe they truly should be used in our relationships with everyone.

We should always be completely humble and gentle. Jesus was humble and gentle all the way to the cross. He is the Son of God and was treated by most the way we treat someone who is homeless. He is



the prime example of humility and gentleness. It is Christ we are to clothe ourselves with each day and this is part of that. Putting on humility and gentleness as we start each day. Being patient with others, always, understanding that no one is perfect.

How we relate to one another in the Church and how we relate to others outside the Church is often what people see and judge our faith on. When we react in humility, grace, forgiveness, and love to others, even those who are not Christians, we display one of the most powerful witnesses we can for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finally, let's see what James has to say in James 1:19-20.

James 1:19-20

(19) My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, (20) because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

When we are feeling offended, often that wells up an anger in us. Our desire is to lash out, or even think we are giving a holy rebuke. If the Holy Spirit is prompting you to say something, you will know it, and I am sure it will be a message that can be shared in love and grace and there will always be a path for repentance and forgiveness. If it is anything but that, it is more than likely in your own flesh. Heed the words of James. Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. Our anger does nothing for the Kingdom of God. Our love for others, on the other hand, is a powerful witness for the Kingdom of God and is exactly what Jesus asks of us all.

If you are easily offended, I encourage you to pray about that. Ask the Lord to help you with that and to thicken up your skin, so to speak. Remember, we have all been created by God with a specific purpose. Some do not realize that yet, and it is our reaction to them and others that will do more to bring them to Jesus. Do not take offense so easily. It does no one any good at all.

