

Overlooking Offense

“A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression (offense).” Proverbs 19:11

Have you been offended by anyone lately? Most likely you have because offense is common and being offended is a common response for us mere mortals.

You and I know the feeling. Discourteous drivers cut us off in traffic. OFFENSE! Waiters don’t top off our beverages as often as we think they should. OFFENSE! A zealous shopper cuts in front of the cashier’s lane. OFFENSE! Overly opinionated people infuriate us if we don’t agree with their position. OFFENSE! Hollywood ruffles our feathers. OFFENSE! (Christians should be offended by the unholiness of Hollywood!).

Now let’s get up close and personal. A close friend betrays our confidence. OFFENSE! A loved one gossips to another relative about us. OFFENSE! A business associate rips us off. OFFENSE! Someone defrauds us and we lose a lot of our hard earned money. OFFENSE! A less qualified person gets the promotion we wanted. OFFENSE! And on and on and on offense goes. Where it might stop, nobody will ever know!

Taking offense boils down to someone saying or doing something that makes us bristle up and dig in a self-protecting, defensive posture.

In Matthew 18:7, Jesus said offenses (stumbling blocks) would come. Offenses are an inevitable, inescapable fact of life. Then Jesus said a huge WOE! to those who offend and cause others to stumble. WOE is a warning! Rest assured, in due time, the Lord will take care of offenders. Mark it down. But while we wait to for Him to whack them (redemptively of course), how do we deal with them?

We are to do what Jesus did: OVERLOOK OFFENSES. Being Christlike, which is the scriptural mark of spiritual maturity, means we must overlook offenses. Read the Gospels through and think about the Lord Jesus. At every turn of His short earthly life, someone tried to trip him up. Stumbling blocks and offense were hurled at Jesus from every direction. **Amazingly, the Son of God was never offended. Jesus overlooked offense and ultimately forgave the offenders (see Luke 23:33).**

God’s Word says it is a man’s “glory” to overlook offenses. Note, a man receives glory, for overlooking, not for looking over offenses. We are rewarded by God when we choose to look the other way when offense looks our way. Looking over

offenses over and over again only leads to anger, resentment and bitterness. Overlooking leads to glory and demonstrates a man's good discretion to avoid anger.

People who are easily offended are thin-skinned, overly sensitive and personalize everything. Some think a spirit of offense is a spiritual gift! They also have what I call "offense radar". Their insecure lives send out emotional signals far and wide "OFFEND ME, OFFEND ME, PLEASE OFFEND ME!" Offense receptive people can sniff out offense miles away.

The spirit of offense is a relationship killer. That is why Jesus warned against being an offender. Offense sabotages healthy relationships between imperfect people. Offense is opposed to the law of love and often causes irreparable damage to people. *Proverbs 18:19 states "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle."* Offense erects an emotional/relational fence between people. Once a brother is offended, taking a fortified city is easier than winning him or her back to our side of the fence!

Offended people are always uptight and very hard to get along with. They keep their acquaintances walking on eggs shells. They personalize everything and drive the persons they love away. They are miserable and make others miserable.

So why do we become offended? Pride. Personality clashes. Some people bug us more than others (People who are most like ME bug me the most!). Insecurities. Turf wars. I have to win, you have to lose. I have to be right, you have to be wrong. Basically, we are self-absorbed, self-centered, intolerant, judgmental and insecure. Offense can be a sharp knife that easily cuts through our feeble emotional defenses to slice and dice our heart and spirit.

Here a few suggestions for overlooking offense and offenders.

- **Work** on becoming secure in Christ.
- **Resolve** to be thick skinned instead of thin skinned.
- **Refuse** to be bitter over offense
- **Release** the offense to the Lord. He can handle it if you can't.
- **Remember** you offend people from time to time too! (Imagine that!)
- **Forgive** the offender and offense.
- **Always ask**, how would Jesus respond to this offense?

If you have been offended, overlook the offense and forgive the offender. Paul gives us clear instructions in Ephesians 4:31-32 about what to do with some really attitudes and feelings that develop when people offend us. *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be*

kind to one another, tenderhearted, for giving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Please note we are “*to put away from us*” the icky stuff. Then we are to put on the kind, tenderhearted, forgiving spirit of Jesus Christ. Why? Because we have offended God with our sins and that is how He has chosen to respond to our offense.

If you are the offender and have offended someone, go to the person, repent, and ask for forgiveness. In Matthew 5:23-24 Jesus teaches us how to go to those we have offended and make things right.

“ If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

Please note that Jesus puts the impetus on us to go and reconcile (to bring back into harmony that which is broken or estranged) with anyone who has been offended by us. We are not to wait for them to come. The word is to go and be reconciled with our brother. Then, and only after being reconciled with our offended brother, are we to return to worship God.

It takes spiritual and emotional guts to overlook offense and the offenders who offend us. Overlooking offense is a decision of my will that only I can make. Offenses will come again and again throughout life. Therefore, I must make it a habit to overlook offenses every time they knock on the door of my heart.

What are you going to do the next time someone offends you? Are you going to bristle with offense? Are you going to dig in and become bitter? Or are you going to overlook the offense and look to the Lord to heal your hurt and help you reconcile with the person if necessary?

Take the offensive and overlook offenses.

***“Great peace have they who love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.”
Psalm 119:165***

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