

Handling an Offense

Introduction

If you have lived for any time in the real world you have had many opportunities to offend and to be offended.

Somebody once said ...

Being offended is a natural consequence of leaving the house. Fran Lebowitz

With social media- do not need to leave- house.

Abraham Lincoln went so far as to say ...

We should be too big to take offense and too noble to give it. Abraham Lincoln

That is a pretty tall order for most of us.

A Christian comedian said ...

I am offended that you are offended.

Or even better yet ...

I am offended that you are offended by me taking offense of your offensive offensiveness!

Over my many years of pastoring I have offended people and have been offended by people.

We usually do not set out to offend others but we can end up offending someone w/o knowing it.

Sometimes the offended person will come to you and so you can try to clean up the offense.

But many times it just hangs out there and nobody knows about it but them AND the many others they tell about their offense.

As a result- many of those will take up that offense as if it was their own offense and now they are offended at you as well.

And the situation just gets worse.

Warning: NEVER take up the offense of another person as if it were your own offense.

Pr 18:17 The first to plead his case seems right, Until another comes and examines him.

Pr 18:13 He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.

Remember, there are two sides to every story. Do not convict a person based on one side of the story.

Pr 17:9 He who conceals a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.

The contrast in this verse is between the peace-maker and tale-bearer.

I could not help but take note of other words related to tale-bearer ...

blabbermouth, busybody, chatterbox, gossip, gossipmonger, meddler, rumormonger, scandalmonger, snoop

Who will I be- the peace maker or gossipmonger? There is nothing more damaging in the church than unresolved offenses.

There is nothing to be gained by telling others about an offense you have w/someone unless you are looking for how to resolve- offense.

However, many times, it is little more than gossip and looking for a sympathetic heart.

Pr 17:14 (MSG) The start of a quarrel is like a leak in a dam, so stop it before it bursts.

Once the water has burst out of a dam you cannot put the water back behind the dam.

Proverbs 16:27–28 (NLT)

27 Scoundrels create trouble; their words are a destructive blaze.

28 A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.

Perhaps that is why the Psalmist said ...

Psalm 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!

Forgiveness, grace, forbearing w/one another, not taking into account a wrong suffered- are like a soothing oil that brings healing- soul/heart.

How do we handle an offense?

First- offenses you caused ...

If you do not know you have caused an offense- in that case there is nothing you can do unless that person chooses to come to you.

However, what happens if you learn that you have inadvertently offended someone?

Matthew 5:23–24 (MSG)

23 “... If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you,

Now, if someone has a problem with me then should they not come to me? Yes ...

But Jesus says that it may not be enough for you to wait for them to come to you ...

24 abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

Wow- If someone has a problem with me and I become aware of it- then I also have some responsibility to try to resolve the offense.

These verses are a picture to me of how much God values relationships and how much He hates division among brothers/sisters.

Both the offender and the offeree have responsibility to bring about reconciliation.

I find this painful- and it certainly requires a great of humility on my part.

Now you may not be able to fix it- but in that case it is on them- you have done all you can.

The Truth and Offense

What happens if what you said was true but it still offended someone?

Am I expected to go to them and apologize for something that is true?

Maybe they just need- put on their big boy pants and own up to it.

From God's perspective- love should be the overarching principle in maintaining relationships.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Sometimes we must give up our right to be right. If we are going to be willing to speak truth and expect others not to be offended- then we must be willing to receive truth w/o offense.

Second- An Offense Against You

What happens if you are the one offended?

Pr 19:11 A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Pr 19.11 (MSG) Smart people know how to hold their tongue; their grandeur is to forgive and forget.

When someone says something that offends me there is a place for me to take the high road. I can choose to NOT take into account- offense. Jesus makes a very strong statement ...

Matthew 5:21–26 (NASB95)

21“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’

22“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

This obviously can be very difficult to walk out. Sometimes it just feels good to be angry at somebody- but I must guard my heart.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Keep- implies having the ability and means to do love even when I am offended.

Fervent- our intent is to apply strenuous effort to maintain our love for the other person.

This obviously only possible in Christ.

Eph 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us ...

We are to love others as Christ has loved us.

Jn 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Am I willing to fight against my own feelings to love those who have hurt me?

1 Cor 13:4 (MSG) ... Love cares more for others than for self.

1 Cor 13:5 (TPT) ... Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense.

The demonstration of true love towards others is going to require the death of our self-life.

Pro 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.

How can we avoid causing offense

There is nothing that will guarantee that you will not offend someone- knowingly/unknowingly.

One of the first things to consider in not causing offense- is in what comes out of our mouth.

Somebody once said ...

Put a delay between your mind and your mouth.

In other words you do not have to say everything that comes into your mind.

Pause and mull it over before releasing it out of your mouth.

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Remember salt makes food taste better-

seasoning our words with salt is to make them

more palatable for others.

Col 4:6 (MSG) Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.

There are many ways to cause an offense- but the primary source of offense is our tongue.

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

The tongue is a ...

>powerful tool that can be used for good or

>terrible weapon-can be used to bring harm

Matthew 12:36–37 (NASB95)

36“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

37“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

It is easy to open our mouth and let it all out w/o considering if the words tear down or build up. We need to be thoughtful about what we say and how we say it.

We are going to find disagreements among ourselves in all manners of life issues.

However, we must be fervent to maintain our relationships in the middle of- disagreements.

As believers we come from very diverse backgrounds/life experiences.

But- never forget- every believer carries a unique aspect of God's glory- we can all benefit from.

James- again speaking of the tongue ...

James 3.9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

We must remember, that others, just like ourselves were also made in- likeness of God. On Sunday- worship God in song- and then with the same tongue- say something derogatory about someone made in God's image.

Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

We must remember that we all serve the same God and we all have the same Father.

That makes us brothers and sisters in Christ.

My brother/sister answers to the same God I do.

They are His servant- not mine- and what right do

I have to demean another servant of God?

Again, back to James ...

James 3.10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

Conclusion

Eph 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

When we are in conflict with someone ...

- >ask God for words- build up/not tear down
- >do not allow passions to take control
- >ask God for an appropriate response for the situation
- >extend grace to the other person
- >be careful not to harm the work of the HS in that person's life