

How to stop Being Offended

One of the biggest hazards, which often causes strife and division in the church today, is when people take offence. And because of this, the Word of God has a lot to say concerning the subject. How many times have you seen friend rise up against friend because of a supposed offence? How many great expectations have been quickly dissolved through a meaningless or petty offence? How many believers carry hurts and even bitterness for years and years because they refuse to let go of an offence?

God's Word tells us clearly how to deal with people who 'have wronged us' or caused us 'injury and insult' (those filled with animosity toward us). If your view of an offence is centred around 'insult, affront and wrongs', you will need to be very careful. Jesus instructs us to ***“love our enemies (adversaries), and pray for those who persecute us” Matthew 5:14.*** Another translation says, ***“bless those who curse you.”*** Now surely this covers insults and all kinds of wrongs? What's more, **Luke 6:27** says, ***“do good to those who hate you.”***

There are two Greek words in the New Testament translated **“offence”**. The first is 'proskomma', which means 'an obstacle against which one may dash his foot'. Literally, a stumbling block! Both words are used together in **Romans 14:21**, ***“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine, nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended, or is made weak.”*** Therefore, we should not do anything which may act as an obstacle against which anyone may bash their foot, and as a result, be caused to stumble. In **Matthew 11:6; 13:21 & 41; 16:23; and 18:7**; we find the other Greek word for **“offence”** - 'skanthalon'. But we'll find it easier to comprehend this word if we read **Matthew 16:23**.....

The Greek word 'skanthalon' is literally 'the trigger of a trap or a snare' – it is the name of the part of the trap to which the bait is attached (a bent sapling or movable stick). This was the very mechanism which tempts or lures the animal, and then ensnares it. As the animal touched this mechanism, the trap was released, thus holding the creature captive. The trap was designed to be enticing enough to lure its victim in, and more importantly, the hunter was actually counting on the animal's inability to resist temptation. Metaphorically, it signifies that which is designed to entice and cause error or sin (something which easily traps or entangles).

Such is the nature of offences. It's easy to be drawn into the snare of an offence. In fact, they are designed to lure us in, captivating us and causing us to be unaware of the consequences. Whenever an offence comes, it's easy to reason that you have a right to be offended. But God's word leaves us no room for speculation! We are to **love** those whose actions and words manifest hatred toward us. 'Skanthalon' is always used figuratively, and ordinarily of anything that arouses prejudice, is a hindrance to others, or causes them to stumble. That is, all forms of snares, traps and stumbling blocks. **Romans 14:13** says, ***“Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block, or a cause (or reason) to fall in our brother's way.”***

The opportunity to offend, or be offended, will present itself repeatedly in your life. Even Jesus offended some people, and I'm sure Jesus did everything right! **Matthew 26:31** – ***“All of you shall be offended because of Me this night.”*** However, my concern is that too many people are offended far too easily! Unfortunately many of you are looking for it rather than overlooking it. So here are some relationship principles to help you avoid the offence trap:

[1] **Define your exact role in the relationship.** Roles are necessary to maintain order and avoid chaos in life. However, if roles are unclear, the people involved are more open to offence. When we examine our

relationships, we must accept the importance and value of everyone's roles - rather than ignoring them. With those roles, come responsibilities and privileges, and we should honour this. Remember to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and to be conscious of their role in your life and yours in theirs.

[2] **Always assume the best concerning others**. Don't be cynical. Always give people the benefit of the doubt. Believe that they mean well or have good intentions, even when you do not understand their actions. Remember, only God knows a man's heart.

[3] **Don't meddle in people's affairs**. Don't get involved in other people's affairs unless you are invited. Our sphere of concern is usually much larger than our sphere of influence. To avoid offending or being offended, you should concentrate on your own sphere of influence. Remember, if you are not a counsellor, don't try and be one!

[4] **Never use a relationship to manipulate or control a person**. Have any of you heard this before? *"If you really loved me you would..." "If you cared about my feelings you wouldn't..." "If you want us to remain friends..."* Putting such heavy demands on people only breeds resentment, and an offence is inevitable. And remember, never to do things just to please others, only do what you desire in your heart.

[5] **Lower your expectations concerning relationships**. Don't expect more out of a relationship than can come about naturally. Offence comes when we start to 'keep score' in a relationship. It's usually a one-sided affair and sounds like this... *"I called you last time, it's your turn..." "She didn't even speak to me, I was standing right there and she just walked by me..."* You can keep an offence at a distance if you realise that all relationships must be normal. They cannot be forced or shoved into existence. Relationships are a two way channel and should be allowed to unfold naturally. It's impossible for an offended person to have a healthy, enjoyable relationship. You can't change what's happened, so **change how you respond to it!**