

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU OFFEND SOMEONE

If someone is offended at me because of something that I've said or done or how I may have "come across" in some way, I need to immediately "value" that person's feelings and the relationship enough to take it (them) seriously. Seriously enough to take responsible action as soon as possible to resolve and rectify the matter, as well as, reconcile & restore the relationship. In fact, Jesus Himself tells us that before we can ever go on in our relationship with God or our service to Him, we must first be reconciled to our brother if they have something against us. (Matt. 5:23-24). Also Paul instructs us that we are not even to allow a day to go by holding on to anger (unresolved problems &/or unreconciled relationships)...because we are actually giving Satan "ground" (or jurisdiction) in our lives – an opportunity to control & or influence our lives....more & more as time passes! (Eph. 4:26-27, 29-32).

These unresolved conflicts will never automatically go away. They will only "build up", get worse & result in further negative, sinful & destructive emotions. (hurt, resentment, bitterness, anger, hatred, depression...)(Heb. 12:15) Sadly, it creates unnecessary tensions that cause people to "dig in", take sides & perpetuate estrangement & division in marriages, families, churches & anywhere people are present! Consequently, it polarizes people, who were once close, to the point of avoiding each other & eventually fractures one's spiritual relationship with God, In 1Jn.4:20-21 we're told that we're deceiving ourselves if we say we love God & not our brother! In fact, Jesus tells us to go further even to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44)! Therefore if I've hurt or offended someone, even if I don't think I have or, it's not my fault (Prov. 12:15) I must be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace(Eph.4:3); How?

1. Humble yourself (Js.4:6-10; 2 Chron. 7:14) abandon all pride, self-centeredness, self will...anything that would hinder God's grace in & through me. Acknowledge who you are...in light of who God is. Seek Him & His will regarding what scripture tells you to do.
2. Pray: Ask God for wisdom (Js 1:5). "Lord help me see this situation from their perspective; show me where I may be wrong & have any "blindspots". What do I need to do to change? Help me be approachable & teachable; set a guard over my mouth (Ps 141:3) See "Prayer for Conflict Resolution".
3. Study other key verses on communication "controlling your tongue" & thinking before you speak.

Proverbs 10:18-21	16:23-24	17:9	21:23
10: 31-32	16:28	17:14	26:20-22
11:9	18:6-8	17:27-28	
15:1	18:21		

4. Examine your heart, life, attitudes, words, actions, responses  
Matt. 7:3-5 Ps. 139:23-24 Ps.26:2 2Cor. 13:5 1Cor.11:28  
It may be necessary to get further counsel from others & even the offended party. (Prov.18:17) in order to better understand this whole situation. While it may be appropriate to communicate "your side" in order to clarify things you had better be quick to listen (Js. 1:19) & slow to speak. Hear their perspective without getting defensive (Prov. 27:5) & quickly move into #5, the "asking for forgiveness" mode!
5. You must be willing to admit wherever you're wrong (and even where they think you've been wrong). It looks like this: "I've examined my heart before God on these matters & I realize that I've ( hurt, offended, sinned against..) you by saying \_\_\_\_\_ doing \_\_\_\_\_ acting \_\_\_\_\_ responding \_\_\_\_\_" (Identify the exact situation, so

there's no mistake in what you're (they're) referring to). And I understand that I've deeply hurt you. I've asked God to forgive me and now would you forgive me?" Then wait and let them respond. You may say "it was not intentional" or "I didn't mean to hurt/offend you" (if, of course, there was no malice (intent to hurt) on your part). But, do not minimize, justify, rationalize, blame shift, make excuses or say anything that would cause that person to feel like you are in anyway defending yourself or "downplaying" the situation or their feelings about it! Their feelings are just as real & they are hurting. Realize that in some cases you are dealing with one's perception more than reality. Besides that, things that have built up for months and even years not only divide and distort relationships but will take time to heal only after following these initial steps. (Prov. 18:19; 28:13; 29:11;16:14

6. Finish strong....follow up.....complete your biblical responsibility by "going the extra mile" (Mt.5:41). Make sure all the loose ends are tied & things are now moving in a "solution-oriented direction". This step is as much for your benefit as it is theirs.
  - a. Read the Sermon on the Mount, especially regarding love in difficult relationships (Matt.5:38-48; 7:1-5; 12 Lk. 6:27-38).
  - b. Make sure all the problems are resolved with everyone involved to everybody's satisfaction....ask
  - c. Make sure all relationships with all the parties are reconciled
  - d. Make sure everybody "involved" knows things are now solved/reconciled so they don't keep something "alive" or take up a reproach-holding something against you when you never did anything directly to them. As public as the sin/problem is, that's how public the confession/solution/communication needs to be....to end the matter.
  - e. Make sure you "defuse" anything that potentially could "build up" (Prov. 15:1; 17:9,14;16:14;10:12;19:11;20:3;1Pet. 4:8)

Even communicate something like "I want to know what you need me to do to make things right (or better). What can I do differently to help build our relationship from now on?" And then LISTEN without your "self protections" up. If you don't understand ask them to clarify and thank them for their patience in advance as you seek to change. Remember, "as much as it depends on you be at peace with all men" (Rom 12:18), do not avenge yourselves (Rom. 12:19) or attach back (Prov. 24:29). Seek to overcome evil by doing good (Rom. 12:21 (17-21). It's not easy but it's worth it. (Prov18:19). By taking all this responsibility to move things in a peaceful, solution-oriented direction, you are communicating and proving that you (1)Value this relationship (2) Seek to "clear the air" and don't want anything to hinder it (3) Don't want the enemy to rob you of the unity, harmony and joy that results when relationships are committed to Christ. (4) Want to obey & please & glorify God. Remember that you are being responsible to do God's will in every situation no matter what – whether anyone else does or not. At least you will be an example, modeling the Christian life, which is rare unfortunately even in churches! Get the help of others if needed (1 Cor. 6:1-6; Phil. 4:2-3) but don't be weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9). Life's too short to allow sin, self or Satan to rob us of a clear conscience & right relationships. If we all choose to forgive quicker than we all choose to be offended, it would eliminate the majority of problems...unfortunately not everyone knows that, therefore we need to be sensitive and willing to pursue love (1Cor. 16:14).

Now that you know what to do (Js.1:22-25; 4:17; Prov. 28:9; 29:1). Do it! And you will be blessed (Js. 1-25; Jn.13:17; Matt. 7:24-27; Lk 11:28