

Offense (scandalize)

What is my responsibility to those who disagree with my behavior?

Our own offenses

- James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.
- James 3:2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.
- Matthew 5:29 – 30 If your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from you...

The gospel causes offense

- 1 Corinthians 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and the Greeks foolishness.
- 1 Peter 2:8 They stumble, being disobedient to the Word, to which they were also appointed. (See also Romans 9:32 – 33, 11:9 - 11.)
- John 6:61 When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you?” (v66, From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.)
- Luke 7:23 Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. (See also Matthew 11:6.)
- Mark 6:3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? So, they were offended at Him. (See also Matthew 13:57.)
- Matthew 24:10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.
- Matthew 15:12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You not know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” (Jesus had pointed out the inconsistency of the traditions.)

Cautions

- 1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. (“Stumble” in this context is to cause, unwittingly, through our liberty, the weak in faith to continue to worship idols.)
- Matthew 17:24 – 27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that come up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a stater; take that and give it to them for Me and you. (“Offend” in this context is to cause them to stop listening to the gospel.)
- Romans 14:21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles. See also 14:13. (“Stumble” in this context is to destroy the work of God, v20.)

My attitude toward those offended

- 2 Corinthians 11:29 Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I do not burn with indignation?

- 1 John 2:10 – 11 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
- Matthew 13:36 – 43 (Explaining the parable of the wheat and the tares, v24 – 30) The Son of Man will send out His angels and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.
- Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

Larger Context

- Luke 17:1 – 2 The occasion spans 15:1 – 17:10. The Pharisees and scribes were complaining about the company Jesus kept. So Jesus addressed parables to them about the “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (15:10) This was followed by parables to the disciples about the unrighteous steward using wealth for the Kingdom, which the Pharisees overheard and became more upset. So, Jesus pushed the issue of their inconsistency with examples about divorce and a parable about the rich man and Lazarus. Turning back to the disciples, Jesus pointed out that people will be offended (17:1), and to be cautious about scandalizing the humble (not the Pharisees). The counterpoint is to have the humility to forgive, which makes the rebuke worthwhile. The disciples recognized that humble behavior combined with forceful teaching is difficult, so they asked for increased faith. Jesus responded by reminding them that they needed the servant’s attitude, not an authoritarian attitude.
- Matthew 18:1 – 35 On this occasion, the disciples wanted to know who was greatest in the Kingdom. Jesus made several of the same points as in Luke 15 – 17: humility, forgiveness, consistency. The warning in 18:6 specifically references destroying the faith of the humble.
- Mark 9:38 – 50 On this occasion, the disciples wanted to stop someone who was casting out demons because that person was not following them. Jesus again warned them not to discourage the humble.
- John 15:18 – 16:4 Hard times can cause one to stumble if hard times are thought to be unusual for the saints. See also Mark 14:27 – 31, Matthew 26:31 – 35, Mark 4:17, Matthew 13:21

Conclusions

- Truth will offend
- Teach humbly, kindly, and compassionately, not authoritatively
- Be careful not to destroy the faith of the humble
- Deal with those who destroy the faith of the humble
- God will weed out the Kingdom at Judgment
- Build faith in order to preserve faith
- Put up with silly practices in order to build faith, not to avoid confrontation
- Don’t let complainers get their way or leadership will shift from the strong in faith to the squeaky wheel (like the Pharisees).