

Responding to offenses. (September 25, 2025)

We seem to be living in a time and culture where people are too easily offended, but maybe it has always been that way. Many years ago, some people were offended by a man as loving and honest as Jesus Himself. “Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’” (Matthew 15:12) If being offended is this common, we will need to learn how to respond when we are offended.

Before we address our responses to an offense, we need to make an important Biblical distinction. The Bible uses the word “offense/offend” in two different ways. One way is to speak of an offense as a reference to sinning against or causing another to stumble (1 Corinthians 10:32). This type of offense needs to be responded to as a sin. (We covered that scenario in last week’s message.)

The other way to offend someone comes from the Greek word for “scandal” and means to trip someone up by surprising them (Matthew 11:6). In this case, the person who offended us didn’t sin against us; they simply behaved in ways that contradicted our desires and sensibilities.

So how do we respond when we have been offended?

The simple answer: We change our expectations.

In some cases, it may be important to tell the person how you were offended because it is tempting you to sin (Romans 14:21) or it may be a simple issue for them to fix (Matthew 17:27). In other cases, we need to accept responsibility for the offense ourselves (Matthew 5:29). And many times, we can simply ignore it and move on. But in all cases, to respond in a beneficial way, we need to take responsibility for our expectations rather than blaming or trying to control others.

Jesus was clear...offenses will come. We cannot expect others to always behave in ways that don’t offend us. What we can do is respond appropriately in a way that serves God and blesses others.