**ARE YOU “OFFENDED”?**

It’s no secret, and therefore should come as no surprise, that people sometimes use words differently than the Bible does. “Offend” is just such a word. Many use “offend” to mean: I *disagree*with you; therefore, your statement “offends” me; I *disapprove*of your conduct, therefore it “offends” me; or, you *hurt my feelings,*therefore I am “offended.” I didn’t consult a common dictionary, since they sometimes *define*a word by its common usage more than its true meaning. However, since this is intended to be a Bible-based article, I did do some research into the Biblical (NT) meaning and usage of the word *“offend”*and some of its derivatives….

When Paul urged the Corinthians NOT to *“give no offense”*(cf. 1Cor.10:32; 2Cor.6:3), the word translated as such is *asprokopos,*which literally refers to a *smooth road,*or *having nothing to strike against;*as in not *leaving*or *placing a stumbling-block*over which one would (spiritually) *stumble*and *fall into sin.*Thus, *giving offense*is, by specific actions or general mode of life, *causing another to sin.*But what about *being offended?*

The other NT word sometimes translated as *“offend”*(or *“offence”*) is the Greek term *skandalizo*(*skan-dal-****id****-zo*). Obviously, it bears resemblance to our word *scandal,*and shares somewhat in meaning also. *Skandalizo* appears 29 times, and carries the idea of either *being caused to fall/sin,*or *causing*another *to fall/sin,*by word, deed, or manner of life.

What does this mean to/for us? Primarily, that either when we *offend*or are ourselves *offended,*some word, action, or lifestyle **has caused sin/apostasy**to occur, e.g., Matt.5:29,20; 13:21; 18:6,8,9; 26:31,33; 1Cor.8:13; 2Cor.11:29. Thus, if we are to use “Biblical words in Biblical ways,” when we are or have been “offended,” another’s words or deeds **have caused us to sin**. Likewise, if we “offend,” we have, by our words or actions, **caused someone else to sin**. The Biblical words do not, in contrast to common usage today, mean that someone *got their feelings hurt,*or simply*disagrees,*and therefore *disapproves.*

I’m NOT suggesting that a Christian cannot use the word “offend” to mean something other than what it means in Scripture. I AM suggesting that we should be more careful how and when we use the term. If someone says or does something that *hurts your feelings,*and you feel they should know as much, say so. Likewise, if you *disapprove*of what another has said or done, and feel they should know as much, say so. And, if you *disagree*with what another has said or done, and feel they should know as much, say so. But can we please **stop being “offended”**by everything? If we weren’t *caused to stumble*and/or *led to sin,*then we weren’t really “offended;” we probably just disagree, disapprove, or got our feelings hurt.

Since every *effect*has a *cause(s)*adequate to have produced it, why are we so *easily offended*these days? I’ll proffer a couple possibilities and you can decide their relative validity and worth:

1. We use the word, even in a spiritual context, without really knowing what it means. Such is unwise and even dangerous, 1Pet.4:11.
2. We are too *easily provoked*and perhaps are even seeking to *take into account wrongs suffered,*both of which are contrary to living by Divine love, cf. 1Cor.13:5.
3. We’ve succumbed to a culture of “victimhood” that sees benefit in being *offended*in as many ways and as often as possible.

What should we do instead of the above? When speaking of being *offended*or *offending*in a spiritual context, use it correctly or utilize other more appropriate terms. If it didn’t *lead someone to sin,*they probably just got their feelings hurt. Toughen up. We live in a *sinful*world. If we spend all our time and energy being “appalled and offended” by every sin, we’re a lot less likely to see and utilize ways we can influence others for truth and righteousness, cf. Matt.9:10-13. Stop playing the Christian “victim” card. It just makes you look weak; and remember that *“God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline,”*2Tim.1:7.

--Philip C. Strong