



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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Offense Given ... Offense Taken

She was hurt, angry, and wanting to vent. She poured out her feelings about those of the male gender, summing up by stating, "Males are such pigs!" Suddenly, she realized that she was talking to a male, and quickly added, "No offense!"

"No offense taken" I replied, noting that we men can indeed at times become quite "piggish" (no offense to our swine friends!)

Offense - what a curious concept it is, and how powerful! Once we move beyond the arenas of war and sports, "offense" denotes a "violation of another person's sense of what is proper and fitting", "causing difficulty, discomfort, or injury" (Webster's Dictionary). Offensiveness is typically seen as a negative, so we often go to great lengths to avoid offending others. We shower, use deoderant, and wash our clothes. We censor our speech and often keep our opinions to ourselves (especially about religion and politics). We try to stay current about the proper labels for different ethnic groups. We avoid pointing out an embarrassing situation rather than helping someone to adjust and correct it. And, when we speak, we attempt to remain "politically correct" (whatever that is).

It's hard work, but it seems to be the right thing to do. Yet, not everyone agrees. Consider, for example:

1. Some people seem intent on being offensive. Their reasons vary. It may be:

- to express their independence and reinforce the perception that "no one controls me."

- to establish their identity as being unique and special.

- to express the anger and frustration generated by their own inner pain and struggle (known and unknown).

2. There are also those who are offensive due to "ignorance", not knowing that their speech or behavior creates discomfort in others. It's normal to them. They just don't know any better, and may not even care.

3. Then, there are those who feign being offended, who actively choose to be offended (or at least appear offended) by another person's words or actions. In a society that denegrates offensiveness, being the "wounded party" becomes a position of power, a position frequently used for personal gain or advancement over an opponent. Hence, we have legal financial settlements for "emotional pain and suffering", and

well-orchestrated cries of disgust from political opportunists.

Yet, some offense is real. It is also very personal. We all have our own standards for "rightness". We also vary in our ability to handle our discomfort after we witness a violation of those standards. The question is ... How fragile are we? How easily are we "tipped over" by the perceived offensiveness of others? How deep are our roots, and how firmly are we attached to what is true and stable?

Remember, we need not be offended (wounded, disturbed) just because someone else is offensive. The degree to which we are protected from these offenses depends directly on the level of strength we possess - strength that grows from a clear sense of who we are, how much we are valued, and why. Standing in this strength, we can choose to not be offended, while still recognizing that our values have been violated. This clears the way for us to think, respond, and act, rather than simply repulse and react.

Let's grow in this strength that allows us to stand in the presence of offense, while confidently sharing the values we hold dear.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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Spirituality and Offense

It's interesting that while Webster's Dictionary defines "offense" early on as "transgressing the moral or divine law" and as "a cause or occasion of sin", it does so under the categories of being archaic or obsolete. I guess that means it used to be more common or acceptable to think in terms of sin or moral law than it is today. After all, political correctness tells us to temper such speech because it makes people feel uncomfortable, judged, and devalued ("offended").

Yet, in Christianity, spirituality and offense are tightly linked. We recognize that our acts of rebellion against God ("sin") are offensive to our God. However, we also celebrate that our God provided a way for our offensiveness to be removed and our great value to remain intact, namely, through Jesus' sacrificial death payment.

The truth of God's love for us, His desire to share a love relationship with us, and the gift of His Spirit within us gives us the strength to remain stable and secure in the presence of offensiveness, intentional or otherwise. This truth also empowers us to overlook offenses and to forgive those who offend, while maintaining a spirit of dignity and respect.

Such strength is a gift, indeed!



"He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."

- Proverbs 17:9

"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is his glory to overlook an offense."

- Proverbs 19:11