

5 Questions to Ask the Next Time You're Offended

Maximus the Confessor (A.D. 580-662) was a Christian theologian, a monk, and an adviser to Constantinople. He taught about “interior freedom,” which could only be experienced by those “who can close their eyes to the fault of a friend” (George Berhold, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, 86).

Nothing hurts quite like the betrayal of a friend. We assume someone has our back and then find out they've been talking about us behind our backs. Or we assume our friendship is strong, and suddenly things change and we receive a cold shoulder. Some offenses are big and others small, but when we take offense, they hurt just the same. We walk away feeling wounded.

Jesus must have felt exactly that way in the garden when He was hours from the cross and asked His closest friends to stand watch with Him while He prayed. Instead, they fell asleep (Matt. 26:40). When He was arrested, they fled—and one denied ever knowing Him (Matt. 26:69-75). Yet, Jesus calls us to live life with “interior freedom,” continually forgiving those who offend us. When Peter asked Jesus how many times he needed to forgive his brother, Jesus answered with hyperbole—implying that we needed to live with an attitude of continual forgiveness (-22). How is this even possible? We're human, and as such, we become victims of criticism, slander and insult.

I have found when I've taken offense—when my feelings have been hurt or I've been betrayed—that I need to get alone with God, ask the Holy Spirit to search my heart and ask myself these five questions:

5 Questions to Ask When You've Been Hurt or Offended

-What is the truth in this situation? As human beings we have extraordinary imaginations. They are a gift from God, but they can get us into trouble. We spin stories in our heads and make assumptions about what people are thinking or feeling. Here's the thing: You can't know for sure what another person is thinking. Truthfully, most people aren't even thinking about you because they're so wrapped up in their own chaos. Instead of spinning a story in your head, step back from the hurt and offer the person grace. Maybe they were just having a bad day. Maybe they were under stress and didn't realize how inconsiderate they were coming across. Instead of assuming the worst about a person, try assuming the best. The truth is you were hurt, but you can move on in grace because of what Jesus did on the cross.

-Do I need to lay down my expectations? I love this question because sometimes, without realizing it, I have put unfair expectations on another person. You do the same. When you've been hurt or offended, step back and ask yourself what expectations you had. Then commit to God to let go of those expectations. If you have high expectations of another person, you will be disappointed. Instead, lay your expectations down and offer others grace.

-What can I take responsibility for? In every misunderstanding or conflict there are two sides to the story. It's always a good practice to ask yourself, "What can I take responsibility for?" And, "Is there anything that I can apologize for?" Until you're willing to ask those hard questions, you put up a wall of defense to guard your heart from the Holy Spirit. But here's the thing: The Holy Spirit is there not only to comfort you, but to bring conviction. Ask Him to search your heart and give Him the freedom to bring to mind any area where you might have been wrong. Then confess to him and apologize to the other individual.

–How is it helping me to hold on to my hurt? It's always good to consider how it's benefiting you to rehearse your hurt. What I think you'll discover if you honestly ask yourself this is that it's not helping you at all. Bitterness is the monument we build to our pain. But once that monument is built, you live in bondage to it. If we're going to live with interior freedom, we must be willing to let go.

–Am I willing to pray blessing over the one who hurt me? After Job's friends hurt him by telling him that God was punishing him because of his sin, God asked Job to pray for blessing for them (Job 42:5-10). Friend, until you are willing to pray blessing for the one who hurt you, you haven't really forgiven.

Hurt will come because we live in a fallen world. But if you are going to live with interior freedom, you must be willing to offer continual forgiveness. Why don't you take some time, get alone with God, and ask yourself these five questions? Then ask the Holy Spirit to give you a renewed heart of love for the person who hurt you. {eoa}

This article originally appeared at .

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