

How to Live Your Best Life in Our Offense-Ridden World

Were you offended today?

We live in a society where taking offense is now the norm. And the catalog of culprits multiplies by the minute, with politics and religion topping the list.

Sadly, it seems our culture is especially offended by the claims of Christianity more so than any other belief system. I used to think it was because of the exclusive salvation claims Christians make. But that's not the case, since Muslims make similar claims.

Perhaps it's because the enemy of our souls knows Jesus truly is the *only* way to the Father and has blinded the eyes and stopped up the ears of those who need to know it. The exclusive claims of other beliefs continue to be proclaimed without obstacles because the enemy knows they don't matter.

So what's a Christian to do when others are offended by our faith in Jesus Christ? I recently read an article in which the author proudly proclaimed her refusal to apologize for the gospel and for her faith in Christ.

I agree with the apostle Paul who wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

Still, what if we *do* need to apologize, but not for the truth of the gospel message? Not for our faith in Christ. And not for the transforming power of God's salvation by the Holy Spirit.

Content Versus Delivery

What if we need to apologize for the way we communicate that message?

We've all seen and heard derogatory comments by self-described Christians addressed to abortionists, homosexuals and others who commit sins different from our own. Comments such as:

- Judgment will come!
- God will punish you for this!
- You'll burn in hell for eternity!

If we close our eyes, we can almost picture the speaker proclaiming the words with a fist raised high in anticipated victory over the forces of evil.

And the world continues to close its ears, shut its eyes, and turn its back on the gospel message.

But what if we said those words with a broken heart? If we spoke them from a place of tenderness for the eternal destiny of others created in the image of God? And what if we talked about hell with tears streaming down our face—grief-stricken over the judgment to come?

Finally, what if the cry of our heart and our mouth is, "I love you, and I don't want you to experience that terrible judgment."

What if we would say, "I was right there with you"? What if we would identify with the apostle Paul, who said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst" (1 Tim. 1:15b).

Not someone else. Me. Us.

But God. But God intervened. He saved me from my sin. He saved me *from* myself. And He saved me—us—for Himself. Not because we're better than other sinners, but because of His lavish

grace.

So what if we would apologize for our arrogance and self-righteousness? What might happen? We might still be mocked and denigrated, but that happens anyway.

Or maybe, just maybe, the other person might walk away having experienced real love from an unexpected source. The kind of love the Holy Spirit can use to speak to their heart and mind long after the conversation ends.

Speak truth in love (see Eph. 4:15). Not arrogantly. Not rejoicing that “they’ll get theirs.” But with a tender heart and tears in our eyes.

Then if anyone is offended, it will be because of the gospel, not because of how we delivered the message. {eo}

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