

growing further

You Can't Offend Me
Love. No Matter What
Rick Long
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Proverbs 19:11 (TPT)

A wise person demonstrates patience, for mercy means holding your tongue. When you are insulted, be quick to forgive and forget it, for you are virtuous when you overlook an offense.

In this series, we will be discussing different groups of people who might do things and believe things that we disagree with and might even be unbiblical. As a group, we Christians have done a poor job of responding to these people in a way that would enable us to reach them with the gospel. It is one thing to stand for what you think is right; it is a completely different thing to get angry with people, particularly unbelievers, who see things differently from you. We are to love people no matter what they do and extend the love of Jesus to them. Today's lesson deals with the fact that as believers, we should never be personally offended by what people do. God is the only one who has the right to be angry with people for the things they do. It is not our job to judge other people. Yet that is exactly what we do when we spew our anger and hate at people who live differently from us.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE –
SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV)

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

1. Pastor Rick mentioned five areas in which people get angry at each other over - what were they? Which one of these typically offends you the most? Why? Do you think some sins are worse than others are as far as God is concerned? According to the above passage, what is the secret to being un-offendable? Do you have trouble forgiving people who think differently from you?

Answer – The five areas Pastor Rick mentioned are: 1. Your politics offend me; 2. Your sexual orientation offends me; 3. Your reproductive choices offend me; 4. Your religious opinions offend me; and 5. Your habits and hang-ups offend me. As far as God is concerned, all sin is equally evil. Lying is just as bad as murder from God's perspective: sin is sin to Him.

Ephesians 4:26 (NIV)

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

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Luke 6:41-42 (NLT2)

“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, ‘Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”

2. Many people look at the above passage as justification to have “a righteous anger” at sin, that sin should anger us as Christians. What do you think they mean? Do you agree with that sentiment? Why? What is the point Jesus is making in the Luke passage above? With whose sin do you think it would be most helpful to be angry? What would happen if God displayed “righteous anger” at our sins? Is it possible to be angered by sin and still love people? How? What about sin should anger us?

Answer – The time it is most helpful to be angry at sin is when it is our own sin, not someone else’s. The consequences of sin should upset us when we see how destructive it is in our lives and the lives of others, but we should never be angry with a sinner for sinning. God is the only one who has the right to have a “righteous anger” at people because he is the only one who is righteous and does not sin.

Luke 6:35-36 (NLT2)

“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.”

3. According to the above passage, when are we most like Jesus? Why do you think this is? Think of as many stories from the gospels as you can where Jesus treated others this way and discuss them. Is anger ever an appropriate response to people who oppose the truth of the Bible? Why not? (Read 1 Corinthians 2:14,15 aloud before you respond to this question).

John 5:26-27 (NIV)

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

John 12:47 (NIV)

“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.”

4. According to the passage above from John 5, did Jesus have the authority to judge people? What does Jesus say about this authority in John 12? In John 12, Jesus tells us the reason he came into the world - what was it? Will there be a day when Jesus will judge the world? When is that day? How should what these passages say determine how we act toward people who do not follow Jesus’ words? What is the only way to win the cultural war that is going on in our country? Answer – Jesus knows that the greatest need that anyone has is not to be told they are wrong, but to be told of the grace of God. We are not here to “win” for our side; the only thing that can and will change the hearts and beliefs of people is to share the gospel with them. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to change people and he can only do that if they know Christ as savior. We do not “win” until every person in the world has trusted in Christ.

5. Pastor Rick gave us a list of nine things to do when someone offends us. They are: 1. Examine my heart immediately; 2. Assume the best about the person; 3. Refuse to fill in the blanks regarding facts I don't know; 4. Refuse to go to others and gossip or slander; 5. Give grace to the offender as if you were that person; 6. Never be offended or angry at a non-believer; 7. Seek to understand the reasons and motives for the offense; 8. Pray for the person consistently and compassionately; and 9. Live peacefully with others as much as it depends on you. Discuss each one and talk about why each one is important.

MAKING IT PRACTICAL (OPTIONAL)

Below are some practical exercises to help you become un-offendable.

Level 1 Challenge: Evaluate the relationships you have with people that you disagree with. Have you ever expressed anger at them because you disagree with something they believe or do? If so, go to them and apologize. If they are an unbeliever, do the best thing you can for them and share the gospel with them.

Level 2 Challenge: If there are people in your life that you disagree with what they do or what they believe, make it a point to be loving toward them: Find something about them that you can compliment and do so. Make sure they know you are on their side because we are all human. Also, read the book Pastor Rick mentioned, Unoffendable by Brandt Hansen.

Level 3 Challenge: As a group, have a party or a dinner where everyone in your group invites someone who they do not agree with. Have someone share the gospel with the group as your study for that night.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

PRAY for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

PONDER YOUR PROGRESS after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what did not. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment.

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Going Further is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We have designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is more important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group.

- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as, “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spend 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately, as part of your accountability to the group, you want to commit to personal life change.
- Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessing of success.