

Offending people: How hard should Christians work to avoid offending other people?

When the New Testament talks about *offending* people it uses one of the following two sets of Greek words:

G4348-4350 + 677 – *proskope* and related words

G4624-4625 – *skandalizo* and related words

Let's look at a few verses that use these words and see if we can figure out a balanced answer to our question.

1. Read 1 Peter 2:4-8. This passage compares Jesus to the cornerstone of a building, using quotes from Is 28:16, Ps 118:22, and Is 8:14. Verse 8 uses forms of both *proskope* and *skandalizo* (stone of *stumbling* and rock of *offense*).

In this passage, what different reactions do people have to the stone?

Some stumble over (are offended by) the stone. How does that apply to Jesus and the gospel? What does it look like?

According to this passage, what is the reason that people stumble over Jesus? Should we work hard to keep people from stumbling over Jesus? Why or why not?

2. Read Gal 5:11.
What is "the stumbling block of the cross"? What does circumcision have to do with it?

How did people react when they stumbled over this stumbling block?

How do you think this holds true today?

Should we work to keep people from being offended by the kind of thing this passage talks about?

3. Read Matt 15:1-14.
What statement offended the Pharisees?

How concerned was Jesus about it?

What reason did Jesus give for not being worried about it? Do you think this is connected at all to the last part of 1 Peter 2:8?

Are there any parallels today to this kind of situation?

4. 1 Cor 10:31-11:1. In verses 23-30, Paul was writing about a specific practice – eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols – that was likely to cause some believers to stumble spiritually. After spending three chapters on the questions that practice raised, Paul summarized his instructions in the four verses we are looking at here.

Look at the context in verses 23-30. What specific thing was causing offense to people? Do you think the verses in 10:31-11:1 apply only to that thing? Or do they apply to every possible offensive action? Why do you think so?

In the New American Standard Version, verse 32 says “give no offense” to anyone. As we’ve seen, the phrase could have been translated “give no cause for stumbling” to anyone. Does it make a difference? Do you think this is relevant to what is called “offending people” today? Why or why not?

What is the reason Paul gives for not giving offense to people?

Why doesn’t this verse contradict Jesus’s offending the Pharisees in Matthew 15?

5. Read 2 Cor 6:1-10. Focus on verse 3.

Does verse 3 say not to offend anyone? What does it say?

What reason does Paul give for not offending people?

In verses 4-10, Paul describes how people often slander him and mock his ministry. Does that contradict verse 3, where Paul says he avoids discrediting the ministry? Explain.

Verses 4-10 describe the opposite of offending people. How would living by those verses make you unlikely to be offensive to people?

6. Read 1 Peter 3:14-18. This does not use the word “offend” but it is a good summary of what we’ve seen.

What does it say about people being offended by us? What does it say is our responsibility?

Are there any other passages you think are relevant to the question?

How hard should Christians work to avoid offending other people?

Resource: list of all verses using those two Greek words/cognates

G4348-4350 + 677 – proskope and related words

Mat 4:6, 7:27, Luk 4:11, Jhn 11:9-10, Act 24:16, Rom 9:32-33, 14:13, 20-21, 1Co 8:9, 10:32, 2Co 6:3, Phl 1:10, 1Pe 2:8

G4624-4625 – skandalizo and related words

Mat 5:29-30, 11:6, 13:21, 41, 57, 15:12, 16:23, 17:27, 18:6-9, 24:10, 26:31, 33 Mar 4:17, 6:3, 9:42-43, 45, 47, 14:27, 29, Luk 7:23, 17:1-2, Jhn 6:61, 16:1, Rom 9:33, 11:9, 14:13, 16:17, 1Co 1:23, 8:13, 2Co 11:29, Gal 5:11, 1Pe 2:8, 1Jo 2:10, Rev 2:14

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