

HAS JESUS OFFENDED YOU LATELY

(Hello, I'm glad your back. I am always glad you come back. I want to help you. I want God to use me to help you. And a lot of you help me. You call me, you tell me things. You know the Christian life is about working together, mutually being a blessing to each other and letting God be a blessing to all of us. Letting Jesus be a blessing to all of us.)

The title of the lesson today is, "Has Jesus offended you lately?" That is an unusual thing to say about Jesus. We talk about how God loves us, Jesus loves us and that Jesus cares about us. Yet I am asking, has Jesus offended you lately? The reason I am asking you is because Jesus calls you deeper and deeper and deeper into the Christian life. Every step that takes you deeper, there are things that will be done that challenge you and shake your world. You will be exposed to things you have never been exposed to. It can offend you at first. You might think, "I don't agree with that. I don't. No." Yet Jesus says if you are going to follow Him, you are going to have to get rid of some of this stuff. You are going to have to step in and begin to do things you have never done before. At first it can be an offense to you.

You know Jesus offended people. Many times we think it was because they were lost or bad people. But Jesus did not offend the "bad people". He was a friend of sinners, prostitutes and people who were doing illegal things with money. It says he was a friend of theirs. Who he offended were religious people. That is what you have to watch out for. When you are serving God, if you are not careful, you become a religious person. And Christianity is not about a religion. It is about a relationship with Jesus. If you get into the business of Christianity, you can become religious.

I am sure you have seen people who go to church for 50 years or longer, but it could be the same church service they went to 30 years ago. Nothing has changed. It is the same songs, same format and same everything. God is not like that. God is always moving. Can you imagine the shake-up that occurred in Jerusalem? There were Jews from many different countries there on the day of Pentecost. Some said, "What is this? We hear them speaking in tongues in our own language, and they're praising God. They're drunk." Have you ever been to church and somebody said you were drunk? You can get drunk on the spirit. It is a wonderful thing because it is just God. Peter said people do not get drunk at 9 o'clock in the morning. This is God. He is doing a new thing, a new day. God is always moving. There are new levels of the walk with God that you do not even know about right now; and you can move into them.

When I left a denominational church and I went into the church I am in now, I thought that I had just been taught the same stuff every Sunday; over and over and over and over. Repent, get saved; repent, get saved; repent, get saved; repent, rededicate, rededicate, rededicate. Now I am being taught things I did not even know were in the Bible. What is an example? The blood covenant, the covenant God cuts with you. Inner healing and deliverance are other examples. You mean Christians can have a demon? We are not possessed by one, but they can certainly oppress you and I learned about that. I learned about giving; really giving. Not just tithing, but really sacrificially giving. I learned the different levels of giving. I learned a greater depth in how to praise and worship. Praise and worship of the Lord is not just singing the same songs every Sunday for fifty years. You cannot. I have done it where you just sit there and do not even think anything about what the words are even meaning. You have sung the song so many times, you just sing them and your mind wanders. God is moving people today into a level of praise and worship that we have never even experienced. From where I started out to where I am now, there were levels of praise and worship that challenged me. So maybe, instead of the title of this lesson being called "Has Jesus Offended You Lately," a better title would be, "Has Jesus Challenged You Lately," to move into things with Him you have never experienced.

Another example of something I was never taught about; and oh, what a wonderful, wonderful thing is prophecy. I only knew about prophecy as end time prophecy. Jesus prophesized this is how it is going to be in the end. I knew about that, I thought that is what it was. I knew about Old Testament prophecy. The Messiah is coming; this is where he is going to be born, this is what he is going to do and this is how he is going to be portrayed. I knew all of that was in the Old Testament. I did not connect Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, which are basically the same thing. In the last days, men and women will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams; your young men will have visions. But, I did not know about all of that. I did not know a normal Christian can do that. And people can get offended. I have seen people get offended and say, "that prophecy stuff isn't for today, I don't know where that is." They also will say it about speaking in

tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They say you get it all when you get saved. Well, I can tell you this; if you get it all when you get saved, I see a lot of Christians that I don't want what they have. You want to be around people who you want what they have, because they have the life of God. It is available through being spirit-filled. It is for everybody. And that could be very offensive to people if you tell them, no, there is more, step out in it. And it challenges people. So today we are talking about has Jesus offended you lately? Has he put something before you, and said, "This is me."

One thing I really struggled over that offended me is the way some people have this shaking when the Holy Spirit comes on them. They shake. I was kind of skeptical of that. I thought, "No, I don't want to do that. And, I don't know if that's real or not." One day the thought crossed my mind, who were the Quakers? Who were the Shakers? You have heard of Shaker furniture, it is beautiful. Quakers are pacifists. I did a study on them. The power of God came on them so strongly that they shook. Their bodies shook, they quaked. The Shakers were people who not only shook, they also spoke in the heavenly language, in the prayer language.

God has always been doing the unusual. God never does the weird. He is not weird. He does not do weird things. We do not serve a weird God. But he does unusual things, does He not? He makes unusual moves in the earth. He does unusual things in the sky. He does unusual things in people's lives. Look what God told Jeremiah and Isaiah to do in order to give a message to the people, a physical message by what was being done. It is pretty unusual. And that is God.

When Jesus' ministry was flourishing, there were so many people coming He could not eat. He could not get away from them. He had to get in the boat and get away from them. He had to go up in the mountains to pray to get away. At a time like that, a normal person might say, "I need to be real careful I don't blow this thing. I've got a lot of people listening to me. I've got a lot of people doing what I know they need to be doing, and they like me." Instead, Jesus began to say things that really thinned the crowd out. There is a saying that the closer you walk with Jesus, the thinner the crowd gets. Listen to what He said. Look at John 6:53 and then 6:60-68 in your Bible. They were just praising him and just wonderful, you're from God and we know you're from God. Jesus said to them in a very serious way, which is, "Verily, verily, I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood; you have no life in you." Now what would you think if your pastor stood up and said, "If you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood you're not part of me. See you next Sunday. Make a decision." We have the Bible to know he was talking about the Lord's Supper, about communion. They did not have that. They were trying to figure out what He said. They probably looked at each other and said, "Did you hear what I just heard? What in the world does that mean? I don't want anything to do with somebody like this. This guy is a nut" and walked off. Many people left him. In fact, even his disciples were offended. Hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching, who can accept it." Now, you know, he had a lot of disciples. He had at least 72. He had 12 that he called apostles. But he had a lot of disciples. And many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching who can accept it."

When a pastor or teacher gives a teaching; get your Bible out. Really check it out. Do not just take their word for it. Research it in the Bible. If you are still confused, say, "Lord, You said you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. What is the truth, God? Show me the truth." And He will. If they had just said that, He could have explained, "Let me tell you what it really means." Instead, the Bible says, "Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before? The Spirit gives life. The flesh counts for nothing."

When you are offended, it is your flesh that gets offended. What are people going to think? What am I going to look like? How much is it going to cost me to do that? That is your flesh. He said the Spirit gives life and the flesh counts for nothing. Our flesh counts for way too much in our lives; and it keeps us from the life of the Spirit. If I really follow Jesus, will I lose all my friends? I will just tell you something. If they are not the kind of friends that really love Jesus, you do not need to be friends with them anyway. I am not saying to be rude to them. I am just saying that your most intimate friends need to be people who love Jesus more than their lives. Jesus was saying to listen and think about what He said to them because there is a deep level. Listen to it. And He went on to say, "The words I have spoken to you about eating my flesh and drinking my blood are Spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." Right there. Now think about this; He had thousands of people following him. He had some disciples. He still knew that there are some of you who do not believe. He did not say, "There is one of you, Judas, who does not believe." Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him. Jesus knew from the beginning Judas was never going to make it. Then he went on to say, "This is why I told you, no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled

him.” You do not come to Jesus unless the Spirit draws you and enables you; even in your salvation experience, even in your deeper walk of being filled with the Holy Spirit experience or even in learning how to really abandon yourself to worship. What happened when He said another hard saying? From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. Can you imagine when their friends said, “Hey, are you still hanging out with that Jesus?” “No” “You’re not?” “Nope.” “Why not?” “That guy said some weird stuff; I don’t want to be a part of it.” He was the author of life, and they missed it.

What did Jesus say to the 12 disciples? He asked them if they were going to leave Him, too. What about you? Are you going to leave me? You know Jesus was so willing to do God’s will if he had to do it by himself with nobody helping him. He would have done it. And he looked at them. He gave them a chance. It’s fixing to get harder than this, guys. There’s going to be more enemies than ever. I am saying things that I need to say. They are truth from God whether people can handle it or not. And He said what about you? Are you going to leave, too? And Peter, he did it right this time. So much of the time we think, Peter did not do it right. Peter did it right for most of his life. He had a few slip ups, but he also did it right. Do not get into thinking that Peter was a goof-off. No. Peter was not. Peter was a wonderful man. He just made some errors. He asked if everyone was going to leave Him. And Simon Peter answered, “Lord, where would we go? You have the words of life. You have the words of eternal life.” Have you ever felt that way when the Lord began to say things that called you to make a decision to go in deeper, to let go of part of your life? Hard to understand, and yet you know it was God. Did you find yourself saying, I can’t leave Him. He is eternal life. The actions, the words that lead you into a deeper Christian walk. But I can tell you, at least in my life, every step I have gone deeper has required me to think carefully what is this going to cost me. Jesus said not to go to battle without sitting down and counting the costs. A king does not do it. If he has 10,000 men and he’s going to fight 20,000 men, he sits down and decides way before he goes to battle. Every time the Lord takes you deeper, it is going to cost you something every time. You have to realize that He has the words to life. He is the author of life. All real life is in him. You have to make that decision. Remember the Scripture earlier in the lesson, at that time many, many quit. It happens today. Many people will say, “I’m not, I’m not going there.” And it is the Lord.

Jesus had impeccable character and yet he still offended people. It can happen to you. You can be a good Christian, trying to follow Jesus, do what he says and say what he says. Even your friends can be offended by it. You have to realize the closer you walk with Jesus, the thinner the crowd gets. Well, Betty, what do you mean? Prove that in the Bible. Think about it. Had 72 that were out there being His disciples, doing things, witnessing to people, praying for people, healing people and doing everything. Then he had 12. The crowd got a little thinner. He had 12 He really trusted, and one of them was a traitor. So really he only had 11. Then when he had His most difficult times or His most intimate times, He had three; Peter, James, and John. There is only one in the bible that says he was the beloved one, and that was John. The closer you get to Jesus, the thinner the crowd gets. It is still worth it. Nearly every time Jesus’ words offend you, whether you are just reading the Bible or you are in a church service and a pastor says it really strong. I am not talking about just screaming at you and mad at you, I am talking about challenging you. I love to be challenged. The first pastor I had that challenged me like that would make me leave church thinking, “Oh, what am I going to do.” I would say, “I don’t know about everybody else in this church, but it steps all over my toes.” But I loved it and eventually responded to it. I am so glad I did. Usually, you have to let go of the opinion of others, a character flaw or move into a dimension of God nobody around you is going into. But I can tell you, there are already people there. They are moving in it.

Why did people really get offended with Jesus? The first one is just because He said the true sayings of God. But another is that He just could not put up with hypocrisy in people. He just could not do it. Jesus loved sinners, prostitutes and thieves. He could not stand hypocrisy in people who said they were religious. He could not stand it. Another way He did it by was by saying harsh things. For example, a very rich young man, who was a good man, came up and said, “I’ve done everything and I want to follow you. I’ve done everything God wants, everything. And I want to follow you Jesus.” Jesus said, “Ok, go sell everything you have and give it to the poor.” The young man went away, sad. And the thing the Bible says is, “and Jesus loved him.” He loved him. It does not even affect God’s love for you if you go away and do not make the choice. But it affects your life. What could that man have had if he had obeyed Jesus? Do you think God is trying to get all your money, make you poor and give it to everybody? No. He knew what was holding that man back. He went right to the thing that was holding him back.

Here are some other things He said that were offensive. "Let the dead bury the dead." The man said, "My father just died, I can't follow you yet." Well, the real truth is it took a long time before you could get your father's estate settled and everything in place. But Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead." He did not say, "Oh, bless your heart, I know you want to follow God. It is all right. I will come back and get you next time." Instead He said, "Let the dead bury the dead." He said, "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me." But people don't want to hear that. People would rather get rid of their cross. And he said, "Take it up and follow me." What does that mean? It means you have these things; do not let them stop you from going in deeper with God.

Another one that really makes people offended by God today is tithing ten percent of their income to the Lord's work. It requires believing that God is in control and has cattle on a thousand hills. He is not trying to get your money. He is trying to give you things, but you have to give before he can give back to you. It says to give and it will be given back to you. Not even in the same measure. If you give ten percent; I can tell you right now God does not give back ten percent. He gives back one hundred fold. It is wonderful. But do you think that does not offend people? There are people who say they will give God some money and they put in a dollar. It says to give ten percent of your income. They respond, "Oh no, I do not believe that." It is right there. And then some people say, "When I get rich, I'll give ten percent." No you won't. If you do not give it now, you will not do it then.

How else did He offend people? Jesus was so focused. The Bible says that He set his face like flint toward Jerusalem. Now that is offensive to people. People would have been more comfortable if He would have just relaxed a little. No. Jerusalem. Hey Jesus, let's take a day off and go fishing. No. Jerusalem. There is a verse in the Old Testament that talks about setting your face like a flint. And Jesus knew the Bible.

Jesus' zeal also offended people. Can you imagine what the people were saying after He cleared the temple? The people were afraid of the leaders. Even though the leaders were doing wrong, they were afraid of them. It did not bother Jesus, he just got that whip and said, "My Father's house will not be a den of thieves." He then proceeds to throw over the tables, knocking them down. And people are wondering, "What in the world is this man doing?" His zeal offended people. However, it will always challenge you to move forward in the spirit. This will continue to happen over and over again. My question to you is; has Jesus offended you lately? Open up.

Quiet Time Questions

1. When feeling challenged or offended by Jesus, what does it cause one to do in our walk with Him?
2. Fill in the blank. The _____ you get to God, the _____ the crowd. What do this mean? (See Mathew 7:13)
3. What are the reasons that Jesus offends people?
4. What are the possible responses to Jesus when he offends us?
5. What is the cost of the battle when being challenged by Jesus?
6. Has He challenged you lately? Are you ready to take the next step? Write a prayer to God about this situation.

To watch the video on HAS JESUS OFFENDED YOU LATELY, Pillar Two, Intimacy with God, go to www.bettyswann.com

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