

# How To Handle Offensive Christians

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Before we begin to explain how to deal with offensive people calling themselves Christians, we need to learn how to identify them. Church-goers often accuse their others of being offensive when they're just telling the truth, and we need to keep in mind that telling the truth is not a condemned offense in the Bible.

*And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. -2 Thessalonians 2:10*

A born-again Christian receives the love of the truth, but congregations today are plagued with false converts who have no love for the truth. Many churches today have become more like a membership-based country club than a place to study the truth of the Word, because most church-goers today reject proper Biblical rebuke, refusing to even consider that they might be wrong in their words/actions.

The first thing we ought to do, when a saved Christian comes to us with an accusation, is examine ourselves.

*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? -2 Corinthians 13:5*

We don't have a responsibility to other Christians to examine ourselves, anymore than we have a responsibility to other Christians to study the Word of God. Our responsibility is to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. -2 Timothy 2:15*

When one Christian approaches another with Biblical rebuke, there are four possibilities:

## **SAMPLE: Bob rebukes Joe**

1. Bob is Scripturally sound, and Joe needs to repent.
2. Despite Bob's rebuke, Joe is Scripturally sound, and Bob needs to repent.
3. Bob and Joe are both wrong.
4. Bob and Joe are both correct.

There are disputable matters in which two Christians can disagree, and both still be correct; for example, one eats meat and the other does not, or one honors the sabbath and the other does not. If a Christian brings to dispute a matter that is at liberty to be based on personal conviction, both positions can be correct, however, it is not as common today as the other three possibilities.

We need to understand that Christians are still men and women in the flesh, and though we put on the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation from wrath, and He sends the Holy Spirit to us for guidance, we are not perfect. Sometimes, we need rebuke to tell us when we have crossed a line, or not observed certain Scripture concerning our actions/words, and we rebuke so that the Body of Christ will be sound in the faith.

*This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; -Titus 1:13*

*A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke. -Proverbs 13:1*

One who rejects proper Biblical rebuke is called a "scorner."

**scorn (v): to hold in extreme contempt; to despise; to condemn; to disdain; to consider another without worth; to neglect**

(See 'scorn', Noah Webster's Dictionary, 1828, retrieved Jan 20, 2014, [webstersdictionary1828.com])

Have you ever been in a conversation in which someone would not hear/read your words, or would not address your words? That is a scorner; someone who neglects to hear anyone who is in opposition to their preconceived beliefs.

*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. -Luke 17:3-4*

If we are unwilling to hear someone's words, how can he/she come and repent and be reconciled to you? Avoiding a man does not mean you will never speak to, nor hear, him again, it just means you don't associate with him as you do with family and friends.

As a Christian, we ought to be at least willing to hear what our Christian brethren have to say to us. On the flip side, we should also be willing to approach someone in a meek and reasonable manner.

*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. -2 Timothy 2:24-26*

**strive (v): To contend; to contest; to struggle in opposition to another; to be in contention or dispute**

(See 'strive', Noah Webster's Dictionary, 1828, retrieved Jan 20, 2014, [webstersdictionary1828.com])

I've watched so many Christians strive in seeking to justify themselves, instead of looking to the Word of God for proper answers, and if two Christians strive against one another, it ends up in a never-ending cycle of contention that eventually boils into hatred. (i.e. hatred is wishing evil upon the other) If you meet a contentious Christian, and after trying to reason with him, he continues his contentious nature, it is best to end the conversation, rather than allow the cycle to continue; though this is not to say that you will not hear their words, but until the other Christian learns Biblical temperance, there is no fruit in the discussion.

One of the easiest ways to identify a contentious Christian is whether or not they rail.

**rail (v): To utter reproaches; to scoff; to use insolent and reproachful language; to reproach or censure in opprobrious terms**

(See 'rail', Noah Webster's Dictionary, 1828, retrieved Jan 20, 2014, [webstersdictionary1828.com])

A railer is one who has a scoffing attitude, and often involves name-calling; for example, I once had a letter where a man, whom I had never spoken to, paid me about twenty insults in the first few paragraphs. This is a striving, contentious, railer, who has less interest in the truth of the Word, than he has interest in justifying himself, and in his pride, belittling others to make himself feel superior.

*And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. -Luke 16:15*

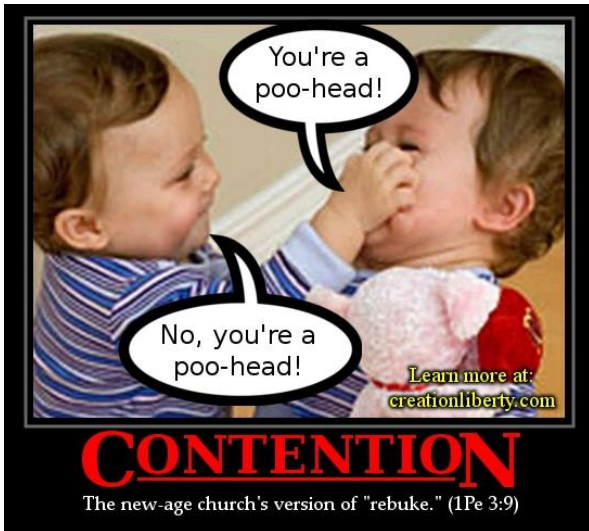
Often, these types of contentious, railing Christians will speak curses and evil at their target, but will use public relations tactics to try and charm an audience to be on his side.

*Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. -Psalm 12:1-2*

First, remember that we don't strive; that is, we don't return railing to the railer, nor do we return evil to the evil-doer. We pray a blessing upon them (if he/she is a Christian).

*See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. -1 Thessalonians 5:15*

*Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. -1 Peter 3:9*



Christians should be longsuffering, which means we take the brunt of insults and attacks from others, but we remain patient. Next, we mark them and avoid them.

*Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences **contrary to the doctrine** which ye have learned; **and avoid them**. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

*-Romans 16:17-18*

**mark (v): To notice; to take particular observation of; to observe critically**

(See 'mark', Noah Webster's Dictionary, 1828, retrieved Jan 20, 2014, [webstersdictionary1828.com])

Notice that it says to avoid those which cause divisions and offenses **CONTRARY TO** the doctrine of Jesus Christ. There are divisions and offenses that are good, and divisions and offenses that are bad, and Christians need to understand the difference. If we are teaching the truth of the Word, we will offend workers of iniquity and unrighteousness, and if we are doing what's right as we are instructed, we will divide from leavened lumps, but those who are dividing and offending by the works of flesh (Gal 5:19-21) are dividing and offending unleavened (good) lumps, and we are to mark and avoid them. (If you don't understand how Jesus Christ taught that division brings peace, read "Did Christ Come to Bring Peace?" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

Most Christians are not used to hearing these things preached in sermons today, and few are willing to do what it takes to do right by God's Word in this matter. If Christians are openly doing the works of the flesh, in their actions and speech, then we ought not to even sit down and have a meal with them, and Paul "beseeched," or urged, Christians to mark and avoid them.

*But now I have written unto you **not to keep company**, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; **with such an one no not to eat**. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. **Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.** -1 Corinthians 5:11-13*

**Why not keep company with them?  
Because our associations will end up influencing us.**

The people we hang out with can influence our behavior. If we spend time with someone who likes to get drunk, it doesn't matter how long it takes, eventually, he can influence us to join in with him. So many Christians believe they are immune to certain actions, and that nothing bad will happen, but that's not what the Bible says:

*Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that **a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?** -1 Corinthians 5:6*

One bad apple ruins the whole barrel, meaning that if one apple has a bruise, it will slowly spread. If we don't cleanse the church of bad apples, pretty soon, the entire church will be full of bad apples, and sadly, many churches today are already heavily leavened. It's because of this that it is imperative that Christians learn how to properly rebuke, repent of their wrong doings/sayings, and sanctify (set apart) themselves from those who reject rebuke and lack repentance.

Notice, it does not say we avoid those we have a disagreement with. Just because a Christian might disagree with me, does not mean I avoid them or cast them out. However, many Christians are selfishly and pridefully abandoning/condemning other Christians over minor disagreements. I've seen a pastor tell a Christian man that the Holy Spirit sent the pastor to help him, but when the man refused to become a member of his church congregation, the pastor abandoned him and never spoke to him again. There's no Biblical justification for that. (Not to mention lying about the Holy Spirit!) It is sickening to watch Christians abuse their liberty in Christ over selfish motivations, instead of putting emphasis on truth and righteousness of the Gospel.

This doesn't mean we mark and avoid every person on the planet:

*I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.*  
-1 Corinthians 5:9-10

But those who are called *BRETHREN IN CHRIST*, who go out and do these things, don't keep company with them. It doesn't mean he/she is not saved, it just means we don't keep company with him/her, for the sake of the Body of Christ, to keep the bride of Christ pure and undefiled.

Let's say we're all in a church congregation together, and you find out someone is doing something wrong. How do you handle it? Do you go to the pastor and let him take care of it? No. The Bible gives instructions on how to handle these situations:

*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, [#1] go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then [#2] take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, [#3] tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, [#4] let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. -Matthew 18:15-17*

This is a *FOUR*-step process, and sadly, most people run to the pastor as if he is a king and let him make a ruling decision on what to do. We all have a responsibility in this process, and I too commonly see pastors usurping authority that is not theirs to take. Things won't always work out this way, and sometimes you have Christian brethren you are rebuking online, so if you can't do all the steps, then at least do as many as you can.

Assuming he is not railing, I typically like to start out by quoting Scripture to another Christian and then asking him questions. This helps keep me from assuming too much without first seeking understanding of his position via his answers. This also helps me to verify if I am Biblically sound in what I'm saying, and we should never immediately approach a situation assuming we are automatically correct; we have to examine ourselves first. (2Cr 13:5) Then, based on his answers, I can see if he is a Christian that can be talked to and reasoned with, or if we are dealing with a scorner.

If he can't be talked to or reasoned with, then get two or three witnesses to establish every word. What if they were right all along and we are the ones not on the proper Scriptural foundation? What if we were judging hypocritically? This is why Christian witnesses to these conflicts are so important. The witnesses and the congregation will help to determine the truth of the matter and will peacefully give both parties equal opportunity to repent and reconcile.

It is not always fun to mark offenses and divisions, and most Christians are too scared to approach others, but it is necessary to make sure we are all on the same path of faith and righteousness, anchored by our our Lord Jesus Christ, protected from evil works of iniquity. I have had numerous letters from Christians talking about how their church leadership has done something wrong, and often, we end up discussing the difficulties in approaching them Biblically.

Most of the time, in one-on-one conversation, the church leader will excuse away his offenses, and any further steps from Matthew 18 end up in the Christian having to leave the congregation to get away from lies and gossip. I'm not saying that Christians coming forward to others always ends up bad, but most of the conversations I've had with Christians on this matter have ended poorly in sin, instead of edification and reconciliation to God's Word. (And that's what sparked me to write about this issue.)

Things may not always go as peacefully as planned, but if you approach someone in a peaceful manner with proper backing from God's Word, then you do not need to be ashamed in approaching any Christian:

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.*  
-2 Timothy 2:15-16

Railings and evil words are profane and vain, and only increase unto more ungodliness, so we should stay away from them. In the end, if you're dealing with someone who is railing accusations and abusive language, and they won't hear a word you have to say, the best thing to do is walk away.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? -Jeremiah 17:9*

We should first make sure that we are on guard from our own pride before we approach someone else, so we don't deceive ourselves.

*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. -Matthew 10:14*

Shaking the dust off one's feet was an Israeli custom of sanctifying (setting apart) oneself from the person or people who refused to listen. If a Christian brethren will not listen to your words, then its best not to speak with him/her at all. At that point, you can pray blessings upon them, and let them go so the Lord can handle them in His timing.

In the end, though we have some responsibilities towards our Christian brethren, we are not responsible *FOR* them. Each of us is responsible for our own actions and words and will be judged accordingly by them.

*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. -Matthew 12:36*

The next time someone offers you a rebuke, try practicing humility and listening to them. Do as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11...

*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* -Acts 17:11

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* -1 Thessalonians 5:21

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* -Romans 12:2

Have the faith and courage to do what is right by God's Word. When someone approaches us, we should listen to what they have to say in meekness and patience. When we approach someone, remember to speak in meekness and patience. If every Christian would do these things, we would find a lot less strife, and a lot more peace. Let's come to one another with the grace we have been given, and that even if we are the ones wrong in a dispute, we can humble ourselves in apology and repentance, just as we hope our Christian brethren will do the same.

If Christian brethren won't speak with you, rails on you, or will not hear you, then it's best to just take your hands off it and let it go.