

Did a perfect Jesus Christ avoid offense?

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BIG SANDY, Texas—When Paul discussed the subject of avoiding offense in a letter to the believers at Corinth, he made a very direct statement: "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Corinthians 10:32).

That sounds pretty clear to me: Don't offend anyone.

Let me ask a question. Is it possible to avoid causing offense to everyone?

Well, if anyone could avoid causing offense, it would be the person who never sinned. Right?

Jesus Christ never sinned, so does that translate into His never offending anyone?

Let's look at His life.

Not a man-pleaser

First, let's establish that Jesus' self-respect was not primarily based upon what people thought of Him.

He regularly made statements that revealed His desire to please His Father in heaven. Some of those words are found in John 4:34, John 5:30, John 6:38, John 8:29 and John 17:4.

Even though He proved His love for people by His actions, He placed His interest in serving the Father above the opinions of people.

Second, let's acknowledge that Jesus fell out of favor with some people.

■ Many religious people sought to trap Him and accuse Him (Luke 11:53-54; 20:20-38).

■ Many religious leaders arrived at the point in life that they sought to kill Him (Luke 22:2).

It isn't too hard to determine why Jesus was out of favor with religious people and their leaders. He corrected their brand of religion.

One famous example is when He corrected them for placing the tradition of elders above the commandments of God (Mark 7:1-14). The example He specifically used was the elders extracting money for the temple (the church) when it should have been used for family (the parents).

Popular for a time

Third, let's accept that Jesus was popular for a time with the multitudes. He served their needs.

- He healed many (Luke 4:40) and cast out many unclean spirits (verse 41).
- He raised a widow's son (Luke 7:11-15) and forgave a prostitute (verses 36-50).
- He healed many (Luke 9:11) and fed many (verses 12-17).

Two-edged sword

Finally, let's recognize that Jesus' actions caused Him to be out of favor with some people and in favor with others.

- The Pharisees hated that Jesus feasted with publicans and sinners (Luke 5:29-30). Don't you think that the sinners appreciated Him?
- The Pharisees didn't like the way His disciples kept the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5). Don't you suppose that His disciples appreciated that He defended them when their actions were described as not being lawful?
- The Pharisees didn't like the fact that Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-10). How do you imagine the man with the healed withered hand felt toward Him?
- When Jesus healed a woman who had had an infirmity for 18 years (Luke 13:11-13), the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation (verse 14). Notice the contrast in verse 17.

His adversaries were ashamed, but the people rejoiced.

God and neighbor

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, it is a fact of life that your obedience will please some people and irritate other people.

Although we should seek to live peaceably with people (Romans 12:18), we can't be consumed by the accusations of people who say that they are offended by our actions.

Loving God and loving neighbor are more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices of the Old Testament system (Mark 12:33).

Those who love God and love neighbor are not far from the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:34).