

Just Because... Doesn't Mean...

By Christina Dixon

It can really get rough when intentions and reality meet. Think about this for a moment.

- ❖ Just because we don't mean to offend others doesn't mean that we won't.
- ❖ Just because we don't mean to overlook things that are important to others doesn't mean that we didn't.
- ❖ Just because we are focused intently on one thing does not mean that other things should not be considered.

So many times we do things without once having a thought about the potential impact our choices will have on those we love.

How do you respond when loved ones point out that you've hurt them, when that wasn't your intent? Do you justify your actions? Do you rationalize? Do you discount your loved one as being overly sensitive? Or do you humbly apologize, confess your failure and ask forgiveness?

Too many times we find humble apologies difficult. As far as we're concerned, others should understand. After all aren't we human? As such, sometimes we don't think things through. Consequently, we leave issues of importance unconsidered, why make such a big deal of it?

Responses like these expose our failure to remember God's instruction to look out not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4). More often than not, pride raises its head and convinces us that the other person is making a mountain out of a molehill. Or we convince ourselves that others are taking their frustrations out on us.

Rarely do we stop to realize that we bear some of the responsibility for causing hurt - even when we don't mean to.

It's just as true that just because others offend us doesn't mean they meant to.

- ❖ Just because others overlooked things that were important to us doesn't mean that we're not important to them.
- ❖ Just because others didn't consider how we might be impacted by their choices, doesn't mean they don't love us.
- ❖ Just because others don't think things through thoroughly doesn't mean they intend to hurt us.

How do you respond when loved ones react to being told that they've hurt you by justifying their actions? Do you condemn? Do you judge? Do you escalate matters by using harsh criticism? Or do you extend mercy, patience, understanding and forgiveness?

Too often, we find it difficult to extend mercy and forgiveness. As far as we're concerned, others should be willing to suffer the penalty for what we see as carelessness. After all just because we're human doesn't mean we can do things without thinking. Hurting people, intentionally or not is a big deal! Right?

Yet as Christians, we are challenged by God's word to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving toward one another, even as God for Christ's sake forgives us (Ephesians 4:32). Rarely do we stop to realize that more than likely, on some level, we have done the exact same thing as the person offending us.

Today, as you consider those who have hurt you, think about those you may have hurt. Then ask yourself, how you would like others to respond to you. Would you want their response to be merciful or merciless? After all, our Lord taught His disciples to pray...

...forgive us our trespasses, AS we forgive those who trespass against us...



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