

# Provocation

The word provoke means to stir up or arouse.

It can be used in a good sense but this is only rarely.

Mostly it refers to an act of making people angry by some real or supposed affront.

All of us have noticed how quick many people are to excuse themselves for some outburst by pleading that they were provoked to do it.

Thus their own wrongdoing is laid on others' actions.

What is overlooked in this neat trick of self-exoneration is that provocation **cannot** stir up what is not already there.

Provocation merely brings out what is already present.

Provocation does **not** change character, it simply reveals it.

**What a person does under provocation is what they really are already.**

Provocation does **not** create immorality, it just brings it to the surface.

A righteous person cannot be provoked to unrighteous acts.

**1 Corinthians 13:5** [King James] *“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;”*

Granted that Christian love may be provoked, it can never be provoked to any act that is incompatible with itself.

If Christian love is stirred to action, the action will be in accord with its own nature. [**1 John 2:10**]

Christian love can never be anything but “*agapé*” love, a love that is spontaneous, irrespective of the rights or the response of the person receiving that love.

To say we were provoked may be some kind of cheap consolation when we lose our temper or display a bad disposition.

**If we are honest with ourselves we are compelled to admit we were in a bad mood already and the provocation merely brought it to the surface.**

The fault is ours, not that of the person who exposed it.

One thing needs to be added, the New Testament teaching warns that those who incite others to evil acts will themselves be brought to stern justice by God. [**Matthew 18:6**]

**Luke 17:1-2** [NIV] *“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied round his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.’”*

“*Little ones*” refers to those who have only just had their minds opened to the truth.

**1 Corinthians 10:32-33; 11:1** [NIV] *“Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God, even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.” ... “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”*

A true Christian who is following the example of Jesus Christ will never do anything that would cause another person in the process of coming to know Jesus Christ and His teaching to stumble.

The devil tempted Jesus Christ, tried to provoke Him to do wrong, but Jesus Christ could not be provoked to evil because there was no evil in Him to stir up, [**Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13**].

Satan’s efforts were wasted and no harm done, but Satan will face the terror of God’s judgement for his unholy attempt, [**2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6, 13; Revelation 20:10**].

Whoever puts a stumbling block in the path of another human being will receive a similar judgement to that of Satan, whether or not they succeed in causing that person to fall.