

That's Not What I Said

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This may come as a shock to some of you, but I like to tease with people. I usually don't do it with strangers. I tend to just do it with friends or people I know and trust. Among them, I know those I can tease and I generally know when I have gone far enough.

One thing I like to do is take something someone says, usually something very innocent, and twist it around until I am putting words in their mouth that in no way resembles what was originally said. It is all in good fun, but I can take a compliment and turn it around to make it sound like the person is really giving an insult.

Recently, while bowling with my league, I had a little bit of fun with one person on the other team. We'll call her "Jane." Jane tends to be a slightly competitive person, just as I am. Since our two teams were bowling against each other, it was fun to see who could get the other a little bit flustered.

On one occasion, she said something and I twisted it around and she told me, "That's not what I said!" Of course, I could recount to her the entire conversation. By the time I finished with my editorial comments, I almost had her believing that she had, in fact, mistakenly said what I was accusing her of saying. Then, it was necessary for me to press the issue beyond believability, just to let her off the hook.

There are some people, however, who do just what I do, only they don't realize they are doing it and they are not joking. They easily take offense, and they will twist what the other person says far beyond what was ever intended. It is almost as if they go out of their way looking for things at which to take offense.

Chances are, you know someone like that. Most people either try to avoid them, or else they have learned to be very guarded in what they say around them. Personally, I always feel as if I am walking on eggshells around them. I am afraid that I might make one false move or say one thing that will be misinterpreted.

The problem with this whole attitude is that it is contrary to what the Bible teaches. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reminds us that love is "slow to anger." Since the Bible teaches that God is characterized by love and that we are to be like God, we also should be slow to anger and quick to forgive. We should go to great lengths to ensure that we overlook things that others say or do. We need to make a conscious effort not to take offense to another person's words or actions.

We never fully understand what prompts another person to speak or act in any given manner. It may be that the words they choose mean something entirely different to them than they do to us. They may have meant no offense to something. It may have been said in jest or with no malice in mind. If we choose to let it go, it allows us to be in control of our feelings instead of allowing another person to determine how we will act or feel. And if we choose to reflect the love of God rather than a less desirable attitude, we will be promoting a more enjoyable atmosphere for everyone.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.