

## 4. Handling misunderstandings

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Nobody in this auditorium wants to be misunderstood. All of us would prefer to be loved and understood well by everyone. But to our dismay, we get misunderstood and and even accused with something we have nothing to do with. That is hurtful and hard to handle.

We all can remember discussions, meals, dates, trips, holidays, or even entire relationships that have been ruined by misunderstandings. While some disagreements can be cleared up quickly and easily, others linger for years, leaving lasting scars on our hearts and our lives. Or some never get to clear it up.

### A. THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD PERSON EVER

Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ was the most misunderstood individual who ever walked this earth. His critics joked about His birth, hinting at illegitimacy. His opposers disputed His heavenly origin and even dared to suggest that satan, rather than God, provided the basis of His power. Jesus's own hometown people rejected Him, scorned His purpose, and condemned His teachings. In the end, these same people accused Him of blasphemy and turned Him over to be crucified. His crimes? Loving people and demonstrating through His words and miraculous acts that He truly was the Son of God and God Himself.

John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Christ collided with this uncomprehending darkness at every turn. For a glimpse of what it must have been like to face unbelief, let's turn to chapter 3 of the Gospel of Mark.

### B. MISUNDERSTOOD BY THE PHARISEES

Mark 3:1-6 And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." 4 Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

The question arises here: was this man with a withered hand planted there by the Pharisees purposely? I think the answer is absolutely yes. Actually, what they did was a compliment to the Lord Jesus. They knew He was compassionate. They also knew that Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath Day and break their tradition. They thought they could corner Him for good.

Jesus told the man with a withered hand to stretch out his hand. He was telling him to do something that is impossible. The crippled man had two options: He could argue with Jesus why he cannot and explain about his paralyzed condition. Or he could just stretch it out, as Jesus had commanded. By faith, he stretched it out and he was healed.

Jesus gives us many commands that we are unable to do, in our own flesh. We can either argue with Him or we can obey Him by faith. God never commands us without enabling us.

The Pharisees made the rules. As the staunch keepers and enforcers of the law, they represented first-century legalism at its fullest. They considered their own long lists of made-up regulations more important than the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses.

According to their Sabbath traditions, if you cut your finger, you could stop the bleeding, but you could not put ointment on the cut. You could stop it from getting worse, but you weren't allowed to make it better. Jesus knew that the Pharisees had passed a law prohibiting healing on the Sabbath except in the case of a life-or-death situation.

How absurd and ridiculous! But no one had the courage or the authority to challenge the religious leaders' stupid and idiotic rules and blatant abuse of power. That is, until Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, came into town.

Our Lord's question in v4 were never answered by His enemies. They wouldn't answer Him because they knew they would incriminate themselves.

The Pharisees felt nothing but murderous hatred so much for Jesus, whom they considered a dangerous rule breaker that they united with the Herodians and started making plans to arrest Jesus and destroy Him.

The Herodians were not a religious party. They were a group of Jews who were sympathetic to King Herod and supported his rule. Most of the Jews despised Herod and obeyed his laws reluctantly. So it was surprising that the Pharisees, who were strict Jews, would join themselves with these disloyal politicians. Because they had a common enemy – Jesus.

Mark 3:7-12 But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. 9 So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. 10 For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. 11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." 12 But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

It seems that this crowd was attracted to Jesus more because of His miraculous works than His message. A typical shallow mindset.

### **C. THE TWELVE APOSTLES**

Mark 3:13-19 And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: 16 Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of

Thunder"; 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

The number of the disciples is significant because there were twelve tribes in the nation of Israel. However, the nation of Israel was now spiritually decayed and ready to reject her own Messiah. The 12 Apostles were the nucleus of this new "spiritual" nation.

According to Luke 6:12, Jesus spent all night in prayer before choosing these twelve men. These twelve men would be able to continue His work when He returned to the Father, and they would also be able to train others to carry on the ministry after them.

- 1) Peter
- 2) Andrew
- 3) James
- 4) John
- 5) Philip
- 6) Bartholomew – a.k.a. Nathanael
- 7) Thomas
- 8) Matthew – a.k.a. Levi
- 9) James, son of Alphaeus
- 10) Thaddaeus – a.k.a. Judas, son of James
- 11) Simon the Zealot
- 12) Judas Iscariot

These twelve guys are not the most brilliant and capable bunch you can find.

Jesus knew what He was getting when He selected them just like when He called me to be the pastor of this church. You might wonder the reason for His selection of me. Don't feel bad, I wonder that myself, too. But I am starting to understand why. Because if you are blessed by the Word of God you hear in the church is obviously not from me. Most likely you have a hard time understanding my broken English and strong accents, so you have to listen harder and pay more attention. While you do that, you get to learn more.

Another reason why the Lord uses me is that I shoot straight and not concerned about if I might offend you or not with the Word of God. I can guarantee you for a couple things: By the time you walk out that door, you will not have an excuse to the Lord that you've never heard the message of Gospel of Jesus Christ or not fed from the Bible.

#### **D. MISUNDERSTOOD BY HIS OWN PEOPLE**

Mark 3:20-21 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind." Jesus' own people, who probably had come to Capernaum from Nazareth, could not understand His obvious obsession with His ministry.

If a man devotes his life to some noble but earthly cause, he is applauded. The musician, the athlete, the businessman, the artist, the statesman who gives himself to his work is recognized for his total devotion. But if a man gives himself in total dedication to the cause of God, he is branded as a religious fanatic.

#### **E. MISUNDERSTOOD BY THE SCRIBES**

Mark 3:22-30 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." 23 So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom can-

not stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. 27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. 28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"-- 30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Jesus didn't stop the Pharisees from plotting His death. He didn't argue with His old friends from Nazareth who suggested that He was crazy. But when the so-called experts in the law, the scribes, made the blatant, blasphemous accusation that His power came from satan and not from God, Jesus strongly rebuked them, pointing out the fallacy their argument.

The spellings "Beelzebub" came into English translations from the Latin Bible, the Vulgate, which derived it from the Hebrew word "Baalzebub" meaning "Lord of the flies," the name of an ancient Canaanite false god. This term can also be translated "the prince of demons." By using this term, the Scribes falsely insinuated that Jesus's power came from satan rather than from God.

No doubt, the scribes' jaws dropped as Jesus exposed both their bad theology and their faulty logic. If it was by the power of satan that He had cast out the demon, then satan was actually fighting against himself!

When you ask people, "What is the unpardonable sin?" they usually reply, "It is blaspheming the Holy Spirit." That answer is wrong. We need to understand what the blasphemy of Holy Spirit is by first understanding what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is all about. Regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit Jesus said these:

John 15:26 But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

In other words, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to point people to the Cross of Jesus Christ, so that they may be saved. When a person continuously reject the invitation of the Holy Spirit, there will be a time when he or she no longer hear from God, because that person's heart becomes callous. Then that person's sin becomes unpardonable.

## **F. MISUNDERSTOOD BY HIS FAMILY**

Mark 3:31-35 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." 33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

Jesus must have grieved when He realized that even His own mother and brothers couldn't understand His passion for ministering to the lost and hurting. His family still seemed to be skeptical about His call.

His “spiritual family” is made up of all those who do the will of God. Our Lord was not suggesting that believers should ignore or abandon their physical families in order to serve God, but only that they put God’s will above everything else in life.

## **G. SUGGESTIONS**

In every family circle, every marriage, every group of friends, and every workplace, misunderstandings occur that can eat away at our relationships like corrosive acid. The longer we leave these disagreements unattended, the more destructive they become.

In order to help you resolve such issues, ask yourself these three questions the next time you face a difficult misunderstanding.

### **1) Ask yourself who is responsible for the problem?**

Before you start fingerpointing, consider that usually both parties have contributed to the situation in some way. Consider the source and the context. Is it possible that you have overreacted to the other person’s words or actions? Try to see the situation from the other person’s perspective and attempt to talk to that person about the problem with understanding and patience.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

### **2) If the problem continues, ask yourself why. Why has this misunderstanding occurred? Why are you upset about it? What is the root cause? Is it something that the other person did, or is it possible that you caused the problem without realizing it?**

Perhaps this situation represents a blind spot in your life, an area in which you need to grow. Do your best to be honest with yourself and the others involved, and try to come to a resolution.

### **3) After you resolve the problem, ask yourself what you have learned? What could you do differently next time?**

As you evaluate what happened, recognize that you and the other party graciously need to forgive each other and move on in order for your relationship to be restored.

## **H. APPLICATION**

**Many great people were misunderstood in their lifetime, even after their death. To be even greater is to forgive those who have misunderstood you.**

Not only was Jesus the greatest and most misunderstood man ever to live – He also was the most forgiving.

Trusting in Him doesn’t prevent us from encountering disagreements, but it does enable us to survive them, move past them, and get on with our lives. By following His example of forgiveness, we can repair the damage done by life’s inevitable misunderstandings.