

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus no longer.*”

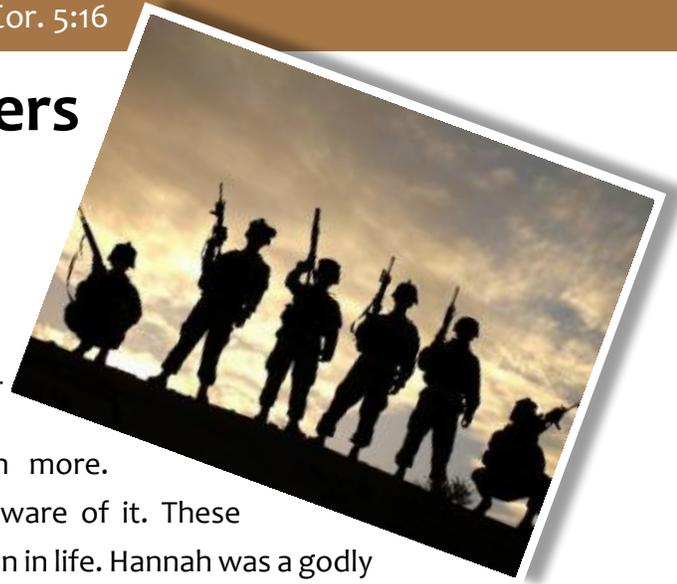
2 Cor. 5:16

Being Misunderstood—Soldiers of Merit (Part 3)

Theme: How to deal with misunderstandings.

Review of Lesson 15

Sometimes when we are in sorrow and down emotionally, those we expect to support us only pile on and hurt us even more. Unfortunately, we often do the same to others and are unaware of it. These hurtful events result from misunderstandings, which are common in life. Hannah was a godly woman who was very much misunderstood and was accused of sinning, when in fact, she was pouring her heart out to the Lord. However, her sincerity and honesty quickly turned this situation around and she was blessed. Learning ways to prevent misunderstandings will help us greatly—the Bible gives us the guidance on how to do it. Some things we can do to help prevent misunderstandings are: **earn respect, be consistently kind and considerate, and exhibit truth.**



Bible Truth

Introduction

Being misunderstood hurts, but there are things you can do to help make it less of a problem in your life, especially in the teen years. As we continue our study of "Being Misunderstood," we will consider another biblical example. Then we will learn more about how to handle the unfair treatments that occur in our lives.

Discussion: Last week's lesson asked you to consider three things: **earn respect, be consistently kind and considerate, and exhibit truth.** Did you try them? What were the results?

Following Orders

In the military, there are specific instructions regarding "following orders;" these instructions

relate directly to our topic. Following orders is vitally important in the military; it is the basis of good command and success. Every soldier is instructed that he/she must follow orders immediately and without question. They are taught, "You must follow your last lawful order." This sounds fairly simple, but at times it can get confusing. First, you must specifically follow orders given to "you" and not those given to someone else, because they may be completely different. Second, the order has to be "lawful." A lawful order is one that agrees with the Geneva Convention (an agreement between major world powers on how to conduct warfare), the laws made by our Congress, and the rules of the military. The Geneva Convention and Congressional/military rules prohibit killing of innocent civilians. So if you were

ordered to attack a certain village and kill all the people (women, children, etc.), that is an unlawful order, and you should not follow it.

Now suppose you were a corporal (a low-ranking soldier in charge of a small fighting squad). Toward evening your captain (much higher rank) came by and said, "Soldier, tomorrow I want you and your men to attack at 0600 hours (*read as "oh six hundred hours" which is 6 AM*). Don't goof this up, or the whole mission may fail." Okay, that is a lawful order, and so you had better follow it no matter how fatigued or hurt the men are or how unreasonable the order may seem. Then a little later your lieutenant came (higher rank than you, but lower than a captain) and said, "Soldier, tomorrow I want you and your men to attack at 0500 hours. Don't goof this up, or the whole mission may fail." Now you have two conflicting orders, but before you can figure out what to do, your sergeant pays you a visit (he is lower in rank than the other two but higher than you). The sergeant says, "Soldier, tomorrow I want you and your men to attack at 0400 hours. Don't goof this up, or the whole mission may fail." You now have three lawful orders given directly to you, but each has a different attack time. Which one do you follow?

It would seem that a soldier should follow the order given by the highest ranking officer. That is incorrect! You must follow your last lawful order even though it was given by the lowest ranking person. So you should prepare to attack at 0400 hours as ordered by your sergeant.

The Most Misunderstood of All Times

The reason for discussing following orders will make sense in a minute. But first, who would be the most misunderstood person of all times? Since this is a lesson dealing with matters of faith, even a child would guess the answer is "Jesus, God, or some

apostle." Actually, it turns out to be a good guess; the answer is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was misunderstood when He was here on earth as a man. Now that He is in Heaven, He is misunderstood probably even more.

When Jesus came to earth in the form of a man, He was not well received. King Herod tried to have Him killed, Satan tried to get Him to sin, and people in general did not believe in Him. The Jewish people were expecting the Messiah to come, but in their mind the Messiah was a deliverer. They expected someone to deliver them from their Roman rulers. Isn't that exactly what the Scripture says? **"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, ..." (Isa. 9:6-7a)**. Sure the verses mention a Child being born, but their idea was that the Child would soon take complete control (the government would be on His shoulders). The idea that the Almighty would come as a baby and live a gentle life was something most people did not understand or believe. They wanted the Messiah to come and soon be a conqueror, triumphing over all their enemies. Then they would believe in Him.

Discuss: If we were the people living in Christ's day, would the majority of us have acted the same? Sure, people are much the same. Israel was a sample of all humanity to show us this.

The way He came and what He accomplished on the Cross was all clearly prophesied in the Bible. **"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14)**. The Deliverer would come as a newborn baby who would

grow up and be very gentle, not the mighty fighting man most thought. Not only gentle, but He would not be usual in any way. So there would be no reason for anyone to take note of Him (unless their spiritual eyes were open). **"For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant... He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him"** (Isa. 53:2).

Jesus knew the correct order for world events and what needed to happen in each person's heart. He was more interested in the eternal matters of truth, justice, salvation, and worship. After these matters were addressed, then He would take care of matters concerning world powers. He wanted people to recognize they were sinners, repent of their sins, and turn to Him in faith. Jesus did not care much about who was in charge of worldly affairs; He was concerned with matters of faith. Doesn't this sound like today? He is concerned with our spiritual welfare much more than our world or our physical bodies. He knows what is truly important in life and what is of lesser importance. So His first coming ended up in His death which was demanded by His own people. God really intended for Jesus to die, but could not, at that time, reveal what the full extent of that death meant. When He came the first time, Jesus was totally misunderstood, except for a small group of believers.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ revealed things that had never been heard or thought before. He revealed the Mystery to the Apostle Paul (as discussed in Lesson 9, *"Time Traveling with God—Part 2"*). Because of this revealed truth, we know why our Age had to be a secret. This new truth is what specifically teaches us about God's plan for today. Now that He is in Heaven, there is a whole new way of viewing Christ. In 2 Cor. 5:16 the Bible reads, **"Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh,**

yet now know we Him thus no longer." This is where the big misunderstanding about Jesus Christ occurs today—people still want to view Him as the babe or carpenter, but not the risen, glorified Son of God. He is not a lowly man any more. Jesus was His earthly name. Now He is exalted in Heaven and is the Lord Jesus Christ. So in G4U lessons, the name Jesus is used when referring to His earthly ministry, but when referring to Him today, we use Christ, Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus, or Lord Jesus Christ. We want to recognize Him as the exalted Lord in Heaven.

What He accomplished on the Cross is the center piece of the Bible; the crucifixion is central to everything we believe and the foundation for all that will occur in the future. We need to know and treasure what is written about Jesus in the Gospels. When the Bible says **"yet now know we Him thus no longer,"** it is saying that He is not a human any longer; so we do not know Him (experience His reality) that way today. It is much like a person that grew up in your hometown, and everyone knew that person according to his/her roots. However, if later in life that person became President of the United States, people would then experience him/her in a new way (they would not know him/her as before). Similarly, Jesus Christ is the exalted Lord today, so we experience His reality in a new way.

As an ambassador for Christ (or soldier in His army), it is important to believe and follow the Lord's instructions specifically given to us. Some people view the Gospels (the life of Jesus) as the most important part of the Bible. However, His words on Earth were primarily related to the earthly Kingdom. His words from Heaven specifically apply to us today. Most believers understand this concept. For example, when they study the Old Testament, they realize that they have to correctly interpret it in order to

determine what is for today and what is not. If this is not done, a person could end up thinking animal sacrifices are required today, which would be totally against God's will (even though it is in the Bible). So we must follow our last lawful order (perhaps "instruction" is a better word). Any order He gives is lawful, so that is not an issue. However, many of the orders/instructions He gave while on the Earth relate to the nation of Israel at that time and are for a previous Age. While He does not change, what is revealed to humans may change. The Body's (body of

believers) last instructions from Him were committed to the Apostle Paul. Paul tells us, **"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (2 Tim. 2:15). This means we must carefully interpret the Word, so we know what applies specifically to our Age.¹

¹ The entire Bible is inspired by God and it is all profitable for our understanding. In addition, there are eternal principles that hold true regardless of where they are found in the Bible. An example of an eternal principle is "God is faithful," so in any age (now or previously) people can trust in this truth.

Life Applications

How to React to Misunderstandings

If you live a godly life, you will experience times of misunderstandings. However, the believer is instructed to live peacefully with all people, as much as possible (Rom. 12:18). In the real world, there will be times when you just cannot live peacefully, because some people are just too inconsiderate, obstinate, or even mean. When you forgive them and try to make amends, they still insist on making you look bad. In such cases, it may be impossible to live peacefully, but do not add to the flames by saying something evil about them. Instead, pray for them. Finally, get over your hurt as soon as possible. Do not let the issue "fester" day after day. It is hard to not take offense when you have been wronged, but this is what God asks of you. Even if the other person persists in his/her misunderstanding, put it behind you and move on knowing the Lord understands your hurt and the injustice you are experiencing.

As you have learned, God wants to transform each believer. Each of us would prefer that He change the other person. You may wonder, "Why do I have to be transformed when I did nothing wrong?" The answer is that God wants to help you to be able to handle the

negative things in your life and transformation does that. Transformation helps mature you in a way that God wants, and that makes you more like Christ who suffered shame and evil treatment without complaining (Heb. 12:2).

Preventing Misunderstandings

Here are three things you can do to help prevent misunderstandings or lessen their pain.

1. Practice Forgiveness. You are instructed to forgive others even as Christ forgave you (Eph. 4:32). Christ forgave you when you did not deserve it. It is easy to forgive someone that asks for it, but He asks you to forgive those who have offended you even when they do not ask for it. That is what makes forgiveness so hard; it is the unnatural act of letting someone "off the hook" when they do not deserve it or don't even ask for it. The natural tendency is to get even or pay them back. Forgiveness helps create relationships that will survive. Misunderstandings are common, but forgiveness counteracts misunderstandings (just as your sins were counteracted by Christ's death for you). Forgiveness does not allow for holding grudges or somehow making the other person suffer.

Discuss: If you forgive someone, you will still have the memory of the unpleasant event. Forgiveness allows you to move on in life, helps protect your mind and body, and often causes the other person to see you differently. In time, the memory fades and the pain disappears.

2. Learn to Accept and to be Content. Don't just pray for God to change others, pray that you will be able to accept others and situations that are not as you expect; this is truly a sign of maturity. Phil. 4:11-13 teaches that God may not remove the tough times in your life, but He will help get you through those tough times (and you will learn to be content). Jesus Christ accepted that He had to come to earth as a baby, had to be misunderstood by most people, and had to endure much pain and suffering. He did all this without complaining. The Apostle Paul also learned this **"...for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content"** (Phil. 4:11b).

3. Follow Your Last Order. The phrase "last order" refers to the Word of God revealed for the Age of Grace. This Word gives His latest instructions to you; guiding what you should think and believe. This is an important thing to learn since it reduces misunderstandings of the Word and with other people. Here are some examples of following your last order.

- You are to forgive others because you are already forgiven by God (Col. 3:13). Your aim should be to forgive others at all times, because you have been forgiven all your sins. Prior to our Age, people were told to forgive others in order to be forgiven (Matt. 6:12). Wow, they were asked to forgive in order to be forgiven by God! How different from today when He instructs you to forgive based on the forgiveness you already have from Him.

- You are to follow God's present-day pattern of accepting others. You are accepted by God without conditions (Eph. 1:6); this assures that He will not reject anyone. You do not have to do anything in order to gain His acceptance, and you have not done anything so bad He won't accept you. In other ages, acceptance was often based on doing something first; for example, Abraham being willing to sacrifice his son.

- In the Gospels, people were told they had to endure to the end in order to be saved (Matt. 24:13). This makes salvation contingent on doing something, and with it the constant fear you may not be able to endure to the end. That is far different than in our Age in which you are saved by faith alone and then sealed so you can never lose it **"...having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"** (Eph. 1:13). So the instructions/orders for our Age provide great comfort and assurance.

Take 2 Heart

Summary

We all get treated unfairly at times, and we are guilty of doing the same to others. We need to have a sensitive heart so we know how to live peacefully with others. Jesus was the most misunderstood and unfairly treated person of all times. He was not accepted by His own people and he was treated shamefully. After His ascension to Heaven, He no longer was an earthly man but the exalted Lord in Heaven. It seems people today still want to view Him as a man and misunderstand Him more now than when He was on earth. Misunderstandings about Him are reduced as we learn how to interpret the Bible correctly. Misunderstandings are also reduced if we learn to follow the last instructions (orders) from the Lord. Our orders are found in the Pauline Epistles. They are given specifically to us; the last lawful orders from the Lord for our Age. (Note: the books after the Pauline Epistles seem to be specifically designed for those living after the Rapture.)

Gospel

We need to know that the central theme of the Bible is Christ's death for us. He was God in the form of a man, and, as such, He suffered in our place. The penalty of our sins has been paid by Christ if we merely believe in Him. Today He is no longer a lowly man, but the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven. That is how we ought to "know" Him today. It is exciting to realize

we can know more about Him today than in any other age, because He revealed a lot of new information to us after His ascension (the Pauline letters). This new information teaches us the wonderful things He is doing for those who trust in Him.

Encouragement

We know now that God planned for our Age before He created anything. His overall plan was to bless us abundantly in Jesus Christ simply through faith in Him. Sometimes we don't feel so blessed and sometimes we grow weary of trying to do our best because we are criticized and misunderstood. This is part of suffering for Christ; it is painful and unfair, but we must expect it. Being a teen is especially hard since other teens and adults put pressure on you to act or do what they want. Christ is not hard on anyone. He understands our fears, knows when we try but fail, and feels the pain we suffer. Please talk to Him (in your own words) about how you feel and what is good and bad in your life. Let Him know you want to follow Him even though you may sometimes fail. He understands and is gracious. The Lord must be extremely pleased with teens that love Him, try to persevere, and are faithful in spite of all life's misunderstandings. The faith of a young person is a precious thing and will lead to an exceptional life in Christ.