

4 More Things to Do When You Feel Misunderstood

Feeling **misunderstood**? As I shared in my last column, it seems I've been misunderstood my whole life. That's why I had to find ways to deal with those negative emotions and the reactions they spark in my soul.

Last week, we talked about four reasons for misunderstandings and two ways to deal with it. Now let's talk about four more tools for the misunderstood: 1) cry it out, 2) forgive, 3) confront the misunderstanding, and 4) trust God. I'll also offer you 6 ways to get your mind off the misunderstanding. Are you ready?

Understanding Joseph's Strategy

Joseph could understand dreams, but nobody could understand him. His family misunderstood his motives. (See Genesis 37:4-10.)

Joseph is an example of a young prophet who probably needed to keep his mouth shut about the call of God on his life. Family members rarely understand our calling unless they are on fire for the Lord. Remember, Jesus said a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown (Mark 6:4). Joseph was so misunderstood that his brothers just got him out of the picture.

How did Joseph handle this? He kept doing the right thing even when the wrong thing was happening to him. I believe he carried that pain with him for the 20-some-odd years that it took him to get from the pit to the palace. When his brothers came to Egypt and he finally revealed himself to them, he wept. It's possible that's when all those hurts and wounds came out.

Many times, if we are feeling misunderstood or rejected, we need to go ahead and have a good cry. But we don't cry in pity of ourselves. We cry and sob at the Lord's feet, asking Him to take the pain away from us, asking Him to heal our hearts, asking Him to help us to forgive.

Job Mastered Misunderstandings

If anyone was misunderstood, it was Job. His friends just kept trying to convince him that he needed to repent of hidden sin. He was falsely accused. He was wrongly judged. On top of everything else, he suffered horribly from the circumstances the enemy brought his way.

What did Job do in response? First of all, he was humble. He cried out to God to show Him the error of His ways. Job 6:24 says, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; cause me to understand wherein I have erred."

Second, Job kept on trusting God no matter what. His wife said, "Curse God and die" (Job 42:9)—but he refused. Of course, it wasn't until Job prayed for his friends, the ones who had falsely accused him, that he got his victory.

Hannah Was Falsely Accused

And let's not forget Hannah. She was sorely misunderstood and falsely accused. There she was, pouring her heart out to God. The Bible says "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish" (1 Sam. 1:10) before she made a vow to commit to her child to the Lord if He would break her barrenness.

"And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, 'How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!'" (vv. 12-13).

Hannah had three choices. She could have walked away angry, speaking ill of the priest and becoming bitter and unforgiving. She could have walked away in misery, feeling sorry for herself and accusing God. Or she could confront it respectfully. She chose the latter and turned an accusation into a blessing:

“Hannah answered and said, ‘No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.’ Then Eli answered and said, ‘Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him’” (vv. 15-17).

Eli got into agreement with her and she got her blessing, and Eli was blessed too since Samuel went into his service.

Mary Was Surely Misunderstood

Mary was about to marry Joseph, the love of her life, when suddenly God called her to be the mother of the Messiah. She wound up pregnant, and she had to tell Joseph. Her only explanation was, “The Holy Ghost did it.” Joseph was like, “Yeah, right.” He was probably brokenhearted and even angry.

Imagine all the emotions these two experienced, but let’s focus on Mary. She was misunderstood. Joseph probably thought she was a harlot. According to Jewish law, if your fiancée turned up pregnant, you could either divorce her or have her stoned. (See Matthew 1:18-24.) How did she handle it? She simply trusted God.

Get Your Mind Off the Misunderstanding

Whether we face an honest misunderstanding or a nasty accusation, we need to respond right because the Lord is watching. He wants to make it right. He wants to vindicate us.

So if you are misunderstood, here are some practical tips for getting your mind off the misunderstanding:

1. First, pray for those who misunderstand you.
2. Be kind and respectful toward those who slight you.
3. Seek the good of those who judge you wrongly.
4. Protect the reputation of those who slander you.
5. Privately work in the best interests of those who are working against you, and purposely avoid telling them what you do for them.
6. Thank the Lord for the purifying effect it has on your life when you are misunderstood.

When we do these things, we have the Spirit of Jesus, “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). Amen.

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