

What to Do When You Feel Misunderstood

It seems I've been **misunderstood** my whole life. I was an extremely shy kid, but some thought I was just a snob. Fast forward a few years, and I embraced blue hair, black clothing—and more misunderstanding. As a prophetic voice, I'm attacked, maligned and otherwise misunderstood on a weekly basis.

Whether you're operating in full-time ministry or full-time motherhood, maybe you can relate. Nobody likes to be **misunderstood**. Indeed, it can be downright discouraging to be doing your utmost for His highest and have your own family, friends and brothers and sisters in Christ judge your message and your motives.

So, what causes these **misunderstandings** and what can we do to help avoid them—or clear them up after they occur? There are at least four reasons for potentially messy misunderstandings we need to understand before we can move on to how to handle ourselves when we are misunderstood.

1. Simple miscommunications. Even the simplest miscommunications can be frustrating—and cause good friends to get into bad arguments.

Here's a practical example. You and your friend agreed to meet at a local restaurant at lunchtime, but nobody agreed what "lunchtime" was beforehand. So you showed up at 1 p.m., and your friend was waiting there for 30 minutes, seething mad that you're late. Or you asked your spouse to pick up your daughter but forgot it was their late night at work, so you got a call from the daycare manager asking where you were—and got a \$15 late charge fee on top of it!

These types of miscommunications are easily avoided by saying

what you mean and meaning what you say—and if there is any question, ask questions. This may sound simple, but it can save you a lot of trouble. Good communication skills are priceless because miscommunication leads to misunderstanding, which leads to misbehavior.

Along those same lines, if we are talking about spiritual things to someone who has their mind on natural things, we are often going to be misunderstood. Jesus warned the disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:6). The disciples thought He was talking about bread, but He was talking about the Pharisees’ nasty religious spirit. They misunderstood His point.

2. Hidden motives. Sometimes we are misunderstood by people who have hidden motives that cloud their ability to understand what we are doing or saying. Often someone operating in pride will accuse someone else of being conceited or exclusive. Someone with a **Jezebel spirit** will accuse another of being controlling. People can project on you what’s in their own heart.

Saul, for example, could not understand that David was trying to honor him. He viewed David as an enemy set on taking the kingdom because his own heart was angry and vengeful. He could not trust that David’s heart was pure. When Saul observed men defecting to David, he blamed David rather than considering how his own actions were causing the exodus (1 Sam. 22).

3. The blind spot. Sometimes we feel misunderstood when, in reality, others understand us better than we think they do. I call this a blind spot. It’s something we don’t see in ourselves but others do. Remember the rich young ruler who thought his heart was so pure toward God? When Jesus told him to sell everything he had, give it to the poor and follow Him, the young man went away sad because he had great possessions. His love for money ultimately won his affection (Matt. 19:16-22).

4. Maybe it's just a feeling. We have to remember that being misunderstood is a feeling. We "feeeeel misunderstood." But we may not be misunderstood at all. We could just feel that way because we don't get the response out of the person that we wanted.

Sometimes we need to accept misunderstandings and just let it be if we are going to move forward in relationships. If it's a trivial issue, we need to just let it pass. But that doesn't mean it doesn't cause us pain.

There's a few different ways to handle real misunderstanding. In part 1 of this series, we're going to tackle the first two: 1) get your mind off your self and 2) just keep speaking the truth.

Get Over Your "Self"

The "misunderstood syndrome," as I call it, taps into self. It's our "self" that needs to feel understood. It's our "self" that feels rejected. It's our "self" that feels lonely. It's our "self" that gets depressed and wants to have a pity party. We need to get our minds off our self and on somebody else, helping others who are in much worse spots than we are. It's amazing how the burdens lift when you get your mind off yourself. And while you are helping someone else, God will help you.

Ultimately, when people misunderstand us, they are not trying to hurt us, so we shouldn't get angry, resentful, bitter or unforgiving about it. Maybe they just can't understand because they haven't been in that place. But Jesus has.

Jesus was misunderstood—and it didn't seem to bother His soul one bit. The Israelites were expecting a Messiah who would lead a natural army. Most people didn't understand who Jesus really was or what His mission was. Even those closest to Him—His family and His friends—did not understand Him. His family thought He was off His rocker. (See Mark 3:20-21.)

Before the cross, He was an embarrassment to His brethren. He was even accused of being demon-possessed. (See Matthew 12:22-30.)

Keep Speaking the Truth

How did Jesus respond to all of this? He just spoke the truth in love and kept on going. He persevered on His mission. He didn't even take a timeout to go up to the mountain and pray all night. He just kept right on doing what He was called to do. His "nevertheless" attitude sought the will of God. Ultimately, millions would understand Him, but still many more do not.

Oh, but that's Jesus, you say? He wasn't the only one in the Bible who was misunderstood. In part 2 of this series, we'll look at how some others handled misunderstandings. Until then, remember that Jesus understands you perfectly (Heb. 4:15). His understanding is inexhaustible and boundless (Ps. 147:5). He is able immediately to run to the cry of those who are suffering. (Heb. 2:18).

These are Scriptures that will help you stay steady in the midst of the pain of misunderstanding and the persecution that sometimes goes along with it. Pray this: "Lord, I thank You that You understand me. I will not let my life be ruled by feelings. My happiness does not depend on other people understanding me. I am free from the misunderstood syndrome." Amen.

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