

God Doesn't Understand Me

Matthew 11:28-30, Matthew 6:19-21

Slide 1

When Elvis Presley died, there were a lot of people who were shocked. In fact, following Elvis' death, there were a number of young men who idolized him so much that they sought to imitate him.

One young man, named Dennis Wise, actually had his face surgically altered and his hair shaped so he could look exactly like his idol.

He learned to play the guitar and even made money appearing onstage as a Presley look-alike.

When he was interviewed by a newspaper about his desire to be like Elvis, he said this: *"Elvis Presley has been an idol of mine ever since I was five years old. I have every record he ever made -- twice over.*

I have pictures in the thousands. I have books, magazines, pillows, and a couple of books in German and Japanese about him. I even have leaves from a tree in the front of his house."

Elvis was his hero, but he said, *"I never got to meet him. I saw Elvis on the stage four times and once I tried to run up to the stage.*

Another time I stood on the wall of his mansion for 12 hours trying to get a glimpse of him, but he had so many people around him that I could never get close to him."

The tragic element of Dennis Wise's story are the words: *"I could never get close to him."*

Slide 2

Today, there are people who say the same about God. They don't feel they can get close to Him. They think that God's distant and uncaring. That He doesn't understand them.

Because of that, there are times when people want to cry out like David did in Psalm 22.

Psalm 22:1-2, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest."

In that Psalm you can almost hear David saying, *"Don't You care? Don't I matter to You? Why aren't You listening to me?"*

Almost every Christian has experienced times when God seemed distant and almost uncaring. Times when it didn't seem we matter to Him.

In fact, the Bible's filled with stories of people who struggled with feelings like those. People who faced overwhelming odds or hopeless circumstances, feeling like God wasn't there for them.

People like Moses, David, Jeremiah, Job, Elijah, and others. They all had times when God seemed distant.

They all struggled with feelings that God wasn't there, that He didn't understand them or, for that matter, even cared.

Like them, many Christians face these same emotions. It's at these times that we sense our weaknesses and shortcomings.

We wish God would just do something! But, when we can't see Him do that "something," it causes us to struggle with our faith.

One of the most intriguing parts of the Bible, to me, is the story of Joseph. Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons.

His brothers were jealous of him because their father loved him best and even gave him a beautiful coat as a gift.

Not only that, God seemed to love Joseph more, too. In fact, He gave Joseph two dreams that essentially said that one day Joseph's brothers would all bow down to him. That didn't go well.

So, when the day came that the brothers got Joseph off by himself, they beat him up, threw him in a pit, and were preparing to murder him when some slave traders happened to arrive.

Because of this, they changed their plans and sold him for 20 shekels silver causing Joseph to end up as a slave in a land days away from his home; unable to see his family again for the next 13 years.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 39:1-5, "Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field."

By my count, in this passage, there are at least four statements declaring how God blessed Joseph when a slave in Egypt.

Regardless that Joseph was a slave, it could've been worse, in fact, it did get worse.

Potiphar's wife took a liking to him and tried to get him to sleep with her. But when Joseph repeatedly refused, she became angry and accused him of trying to rape her.

Genesis 39:19-20 tells us, *"When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined."*

Then we're told in Genesis 39:21-23, *"The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did."*

Two more times, while Joseph was in prison, we're told that God was with him. That makes a total of at least six times in Genesis 39, where we're told God was with Joseph.

This is the ONLY time in Scripture where we're repeatedly told God was with someone. But why? Why would this show up so often in these 23 verses?

Well, it shows up that often because you'd never have believed it if the Bible hadn't told you. For all intents and purposes, it looked like God had abandoned Joseph.

But in Genesis 39, God wanted to make sure you knew that wasn't true. God had always been with Joseph. God had always cared for Joseph.

Joseph endured the hardship of slavery and prison for about 13 years of his life. He survived those difficulties because he knew that God hadn't abandoned him.

In the midst of his suffering, Joseph decided to focus on the "truth" that God would always be there for him.

Slide 3

Several years ago, there was a song about faith by the group "Casting Crowns." It was called "*The Voice of Truth*," which spoke of a life shaken by doubt.

In the first verse, the singer wished he had the faith that Peter had when he stepped out of the boat onto the waves.

"But the waves are calling out my name - and they laugh at me. Reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed. The waves they keep on telling me time and time again. 'Boy, you'll never win! You'll never win!'"

In the second verse the singer says he wished he had the faith that David had when he stood before Goliath with just a sling and stone.

"But the giant's calling out my name - and he laughs at me. Reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed. The giant keeps on telling me time and time again. 'Boy you'll never win! You'll never win!'"

Then the chorus says: "*But the Voice of Truth tells me a different story. The Voice of Truth says, 'Do not be afraid!' And the Voice of Truth says, 'This is for My glory.' Out of all the voices calling out to me I will choose to listen and believe the Voice of Truth.*"

What does "*The Voice Of Truth*" say? It says that no matter what situations we face; no matter with what we struggle; Jesus will be there to reach out His hand to pull us out of the waves.

God will be there to help us face the giant that we'd never be able to handle alone. How do we know this, because God promised us in Hebrews 13:5, *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

Over the next few weeks, we're going to be talking about LIES that people believe and the first lie is: God doesn't care.

Satan whispers in our ear that He's not there, that He doesn't understand, but the repeated theme in Scripture is, for God's people, that's not true!

Matthew 11:28-30, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

Jesus cares. Jesus understands. You see, we live in a fallen world. A world damaged by iniquity and sin, and, because we live in this fallen world, we'll experience heartache, disappointment, and helplessness.

Jesus knows that. That's why He said, *"Bring your burdens to me. Bring your heartaches and your fears and your failures, because I DO understand, I DO care, and I CAN give you the encouragement and peace you need."*

Our problem is that we depend on earthly things. We want the security that we think the things of this earth can supply.

Then, when we find that we can't depend on those things, that we just can't hang onto them, that's when we feel God doesn't care.

But in Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus said, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."*

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We live in a fallen world where the things we cling to fail us. That’s why Jesus tells us, *“In this world you will have trouble.”*

This world is not our home, we’re just passing through and, if we’re smart, our treasures will be laid up somewhere beyond the blue.

Since you can’t hold onto anything in this life, the things of this earth will slip through your fingers like sand.

This is why we must heed Peter’s advice in 1 Peter 5:6-7, *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

Slide 4

Conclusion

I want to close with story of a woman who lived in the 1800s. Her name was Charlotte Elliott. Her grandfather had been a preacher and her brother was a preacher.

She was raised in a godly home. She loved poetry and music and was blessed with a strong imagination and a cultured, intellectual mind.

But she struggled with anger and bitterness because she felt that God didn’t care for her. She felt that He didn’t understand her needs.

Why was she so bitter and angry? She was an invalid and had been in poor health most of her life.

One day she shared that anger with a visiting preacher. The preacher listened but then he insisted that what she needed most was to turn her life over to God, to come to Him just as she was, with all her bitterness and anger.

All that night she struggled with what he'd said. She resented him and considered him to be callous and uncaring because of what he'd said.

But she finally turned her life over to God. She came to the Jesus Who said, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

That changed her life. She got to the point where she knew God was always near and that He would never leave or forsake her.

She ended up writing 70 or 80 hymns, most of which you wouldn't know, but she also wrote one you would know.

It was a hymn that became one of the most powerful invitation songs ever sung; prompted by the words of that preacher who told her that she should come to Jesus just as she was.

Two verses of this great hymn say it all:

*"Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me,
and that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I
come!"*

*Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt;
fightings within, and fears without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"*