



BEACON

Vol. LV / No. 20

May 18, 2026

A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ

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God Understands

Mike Demory

God's Word describes His multi-faceted character and nature, which the Psalmist wrote:

The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; Slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD *is* good to all: And his tender mercies *are* over all his works (Psa. 145:8-9).

James said:

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful [compassionate], and of tender mercy (Jam. 5:11).

There is a side to God's nature that many of us have misconstrued, one the Psalmist reminds, "Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: His understanding *is* infinite" (Psa. 147:5). *Understanding* means "to perceive; to know with the mind; to discern; to know by experience & observation; conscious awareness." Certainly, we will all agree that God's understanding or perception of things is infinite, as compared to our own: "And lean not unto thine own understanding" (Pro. 3:5). Preachers hear a multitude of excuses for not putting the kingdom of God first in members' lives, and believe me, when I first obeyed the Gospel, I used them too. But to put God's infinite understanding in the category of worldly thinking is spiritually unhealthy. Let us look at some of the excuses Christians sometimes use in the name of God's understanding nature.

1. God understands that parents must love their children no matter what they do. As is the

case with God our Father, who loved us so much, He sent His Only begotten Son, despite our being sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8), parents will also love their children despite the trouble they may get into, or the rebellion they display as they grow up. However, love should never equal tolerance or ignoring of sinful activity. Christian parents, above all, should realize that God does not understand or condone parents who refuse to discipline their children. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Pro. 13:24). "Withhold not correction from the child: For *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (23:13). The same is true of children who have grown up and living on their own. God still requires discipline, but in a different way. The withdrawing of fellowship is just as much a command for family members as for erring spiritual family members. God does not understand tolerating a child or church member who has turned to homosexuality, adultery, porn, theft, etc. He demands that we rebuke them, and if they do not repent, then withdraw from them. As hard as it may be (2 The. 3:6).

2. God understands that we must live in the world. The misapplication of God's infinite understanding is used to justify various sins. When the weather begins to heat up, what better time to fall back on God's understanding than when wearing shorts, immodest swimwear, tank tops, and short skirts, among many otherworldly

apparel? Or when all the summer sports are in full swing, we would rather be with the world than with brethren studying God's Word? Then, there is the constant rebellion of God's children forsaking the assembling of the saints on Sunday and Wednesday nights.

The problem we face, whether we admit it or not, is that God does not understand such thinking. We only say that He does this to justify our weaknesses. Jesus prayed that His disciples would not be of the world, as He was not of the world

(John 17:15-16). In 1 John 2:15-17, the apostle warns us to "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How much plainer does the Holy Spirit have to be in explaining God's understanding of things? James so pointedly reminds us, "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (Jam. 4:4).

Mexico, MO

A Separate People

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The divine idea of separation in religion is as old as the Jewish race. God divinely determined to raise up a people to be His own, a peculiar people, separate from all other people, to preserve belief in the true and living God, to prepare the race of man, then in universal apostasy, for the coming of the Redeemer of man.

God chose Abraham to be the father of the chosen race. But idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees was not a land to nourish such a race. Influences were overwhelmingly against God's purpose to raise up a separate people. Hence, the call of God came to Abram to abandon country and kindred and seek a home in an unknown land. It was a stern requirement, but the true philosophy and absolute necessity of such a demand is seen, and the lofty purposes of God justify the radical measure. "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him" (Gen. 12:4). And that is the beginning of separation—a separate family.

Years afterwards, the posterity of Abraham, through a series of varied providential circumstances, settled in the land of Egypt. There, they grew into a numerous race. Their presence within the empire presented a rather ominous aspect to Egypt's Pharaoh, and, as a safety measure, the Israelites were reduced to serfdom. Time developed that they could not serve God in Egypt. Their religion was contrary to Egyptian customs

and was in direct conflict with Egyptian idolatry. Separation was essential. God called them out of Egypt. The emancipation of Israel was accomplished by wondrous power. A peculiar nation was formed at Sinai, with peculiar laws, a peculiar government, and peculiar life and relations. In keeping this law and maintaining this separation Israel was blessed. But, when they departed, changed their government (1 Sam. 8), served other gods (Deu. 8:19), and formed alliances, they were rejected by God and subjected by their enemies. Only after reformation did God grant them restoration (Ezra 10:10-11). The lesson of the story is separation—a separate nation.

That is not the end of the story of separation. God still requires it—a separate church.

But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

As fleshly Israel was called out of Egypt, God has called the church, spiritual Israel, out of the world. To retain the favor of God, the church must maintain that separation distinct and peculiar.

1. The church must maintain separation in speech. "Hold fast the form of sound words,

“The world has enough of its own sorrows and does not wish to be burdened with ours. ‘Every man shall bear his own burden.’ When the angry storm clouds gather thick and fast over our heads and threaten to sweep us away, it is best to endure the pangs of grief in silence, for a cold and heartless world has all the load it can carry. God, alone, can soften our grief and give each cloud a lining of light. After the storm comes the sunshine, darkness, and the morning light, and after the fleeting shadows of earth, the eternal light of heaven.”

Author Unknown

which thou hast heard of me” (2 Tim. 1:13). The power of a united language is demonstrated in the Tower of Babel. It became the bond of an apostate union which God had to break up in a confusion of tongues. It is so that unity and purity of speech—calling Bible things by Bible names—is a bond among Christians that will triumph over error and bring order out of confusion.

2. The church must maintain separation in doctrine. Paul’s charge to “preach the word” and his admonition to “speak thou the things that become sound doctrine” need constant emphasis today. There can be no compromise. Jeremiah said:

my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).

God’s Word is the fountain of living water, our only source of truth. The creeds and doctrines of men are broken cisterns. A compromise with error can only be regarded as a repetition of the evils assailed by the prophet Jeremiah in his day. The New Testament command to “touch not, taste not, and handle not,” does not refer to strong drink, but to “the commandments and doctrines

of men” (Col. 2:21-22). It is a warning against flirting with error and fraternizing with denominationalism. The growing idea that the “church of Christ” is just a church among churches will prove fatal, and it must not prevail. It is the church or nothing. It is only one way or none. Any participation on the part of members of the church of Christ in denominational functions can only compromise the church and is detrimental to the cause of truth.

3. The church must maintain separation in worship. The Old Testament injunction to “take heed lest ye turn aside” has its counterpart in the New Testament counsel:

Let no man beguile you...intruding into those things which he hath not seen,...And not holding the Head,...after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship (Col. 2:18-23).

Self-devised worship is condemned along with man-written creeds and man-made doctrines. The New Testament pattern must be adhered to. The forms and formalities of men in worship must be shunned. God’s worship is sacred and God is jealous. He requires separation in worship.

4. Finally, Christians must maintain separation in life. Terms of dignity are applied to Christians. The church is “a chosen generation,” “a royal priesthood,” and “a holy nation.” Christians are to “show forth the praises [or excellencies]” of God who called them. But is there any visible distinction in the lives of professed Christians today and admitted non-Christians? What is it that non-Christians do that most professed Christians are not doing?

The demand of the Bible upon Christians is to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” It is a demand for separation of life. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you” (1 Cor. 6:17).

Deceased

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Beacon

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Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Nancy Travis

Linda Worley

Carla Bureson

Bill & Pam Busch

Linda Parks

Please Remember

May 31

Fifth Sunday Dinner after the morning service. Singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

Weekly Services

Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

Bellview Church of Christ

Bishops: Paul Brantley
Michael Hatcher

Minister: Bill Busch
Tim Cozad