



REFLECTIONS

February 26, 2017

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:34

Understanding

As a child, I remember inquiring of someone in authority about a curiosity I had. “Don’t ask so many questions,” they replied impatiently. Now I’ve been guilty of that same impatience over the years. Responses to such request for information or explanation are sometimes provoked by attention to something deemed more urgent, or by an answer requiring too much time to explain. And sometimes it is used to hide ignorance when one doesn’t know the answer. But questions are important to ask.

Questions request information or explanation; but the underlying desire is to understand. And in that pursuit, we most often don’t ask enough.

How often do we wonder about the *what, how, or why* of something in Scripture but let it pass being content with no answer? So, we accept our ignorance and continue life with neither the information nor understanding. Oftentimes though, we form our own answer. “Well, it’s probably so and so.” And the longer we let ourselves go on with our made-up answer, the more we believe it; and the longer we believe it, the more likely we are to accept it as true. The likely outcome of the chain of thought is misunderstanding, the result of fact *presumed to be, but incorrect*.

Misunderstandings happen almost daily. Some form of miscommunication manifests by one party thinking one thing, and the other thinking something else. Truth triggers response. But so does truth presumed. Understanding guides behavior. Misunderstanding misguides behavior. So, if misguided behavior produces bad results, might not a clarifying question or two help?

Stephen Covey is credited with the adage to *seek first to understand; then to be understood*. But Scripture has spoken of the importance of understanding long before Covey wrote it. *Though it cost you all you have, get understanding.* (Proverbs 4:7) And, *a man of understanding delights in wisdom.* (Proverbs 10:23) Or, *choose understanding rather than silver.* (Proverbs 16:16) And high in importance is the understanding of one another.

Remember the book, *Same Kind of Different as Me*, the true story co-authored by Denver Moore, a once homeless black man, and Ron Hall, a white man who befriended him. In a story from their follow-up book, *What Difference Do It Make*, Ron turned away a panhandler for apparent drunkenness. “Oh, Mr. Ron. He ain’t drunk,” Denver corrected. “He has a disease that makes him that-a-way.” Had Ron’s presumption gone uncorrected, a needy man would have gone wanting.

Seek first to understand. It’s part of loving each other.

And it’s the way Jesus loved us.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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