

Our Unusual God: Part 1

The dictionary defines the word “unusual” as “uncommon” or “rare.” Something that is unusual is something that you would not expect. For a short while, my father had a very unusual car. If you saw it going down the road, you would think it was just another car. The thing that made the car unusual was that it could do in the water. I never will forget riding in a car with my father to the lake of the pines. When we got on the ramp where the boats entered the water, my father went down the ramp and simply drove the car out to the lake. Suddenly, it had become a boat. That car was unusual in that it did what you would not expect it to do. God is like that. He does things that you would not expect him to do. One of our big problems is the fact that we expect to God to act like us, and he does not. And when he does not, we often think something is wrong. Much of the time, nothing is wrong. God is just acting like who he is instead of acting like we are.

In the movie “Rudy,” the undersized Notre Dame football player endures some tough times because his dream to play for Notre Dame is not being fulfilled. He goes to see a Catholic priest, and the priest says the following words: “Son, in 35 years of religious study, I have only come up with two hard incontrovertible facts: there is a God and I’m not Him.” There is a lot of wisdom in those words. There is a God, and we’re not him. God is different than we are in whom he is and in how he acts. That is why the psalm writer says

Psalm 27: 11, “ Teach me Your way, O Lord.”

1. GOD IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE HE DOESN’T EXIST AS WE DO

If God is the creator, and we are the created ones, then you would expect him to be very different than we are. If he were not different than us, then he would not have been able to create us. God is the eternal spirit who created all things. He is not bound by any limitations whatsoever, and he has need of nothing.

Isaiah 46:9, “For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,

In his book *Miracles*, C. S. Lewis compares our human talk about God to shellfish talking to each other about humans. If a mystical shellfish catches a glimpse of what a human is like, he will attempt to share his vision with his fellow clams. He begins by telling them how unlike themselves humans are. Humans have no shells, like clams; they aren’t attached to rocks; and they do not live surrounded by water. Those three dynamics, shells, rocks, and water are important to clams, so the clam begins to have a negative image of a human. Lewis writes,

“Uncorrected by any positive insight, they build up a picture of Man as a sort of amorphous jelly (no shell) existing nowhere in particular (no rocks); and never eating (because there’s no water to bring nutrients to him). So the shellfish would conclude that man is a ‘famished jelly existing in a dimensionless void.’”

Any attempt to understand God apart from what he is revealed about himself is doomed to failure. Our information about God comes from the bible.

Another illustration might be the question that children often ask "If God created everything, then who created God?" You see, we live in a world where everything comes from something. Nothing in our world comes out of nothing, hence we think everything is like our world. But our world did come out of nothing. That is what Genesis chapter 1 tells us. Our world, our universe, and everything in it came from God. We think that fits with our understanding of the world because it means that our world came from somewhere, namely God. But it really doesn't fit. Our world doesn't come from God, God created our world out of nothing. He did not take a chunk of His godliness and make the world out of it, no He made it out of nothing. Clearly God exists differently than the way we exist in this world. The answer to the child's question of "Who made God" is that God is defined as being unmade, uncreated, existing forever. It is a silly questions in the end, kind of like asking how much the color blue weighs.

2. God is unusual because He doesn't think like we think

God's thoughts are so far removed from mine and your thoughts, and God's ways are so far removed from mine and your ways that He's on an entirely different level.

Isaiah 55:8-9, “My thoughts are completely different from yours,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. 9For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

We live in a world where people and animals have varying degrees of intelligence. For example, what dog do you think would be the most intelligent dog? According to one Internet site, the Border collie is the most intelligent dog with the poodle coming in second place. The German shepherd was number three, and the golden retriever was number four. Among the particularly dumb dogs were the bulldog, the chow and the bloodhound. Just as dogs vary in intelligence so do people. The lord is not like us because he knows everything.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter six that God knows what we have need of even before we ask. After the lord's crucifixion and resurrection, he appeared to Peter and asked him three repetitive questions. The third answer that Peter gave was the one the lord wanted

to hear when he said, "'Lord you know I love you ... you know everything!" That is the same answer the lord wants us to give when we go through those times in life which don't seem to make sense. He wants is to say, "Lord, you know everything." God wants us to trust his thoughts. Do we? When we lose a loved one, when we face financial difficulties or poor health, do we trust God's thoughts? Are we able to look up to him and say, "Lord, I love you. You know everything."

3. God is unusual because he acts differently than we do

If he exists in a different form than we do, and if he thinks differently than we do, it would stand to reason that you'll act differently than we do.

a) He is quick to forgive

It is not uncommon for us to have a hard time with forgiveness. In fact, failure to forgive those who have offended us is probably one of the most prevalent sins in our world. We just don't want to let go of our bitterness and let someone off the hook as though they had never wounded us. We would much rather carry a grudge around with us. We even take up the offences of other people. We want to make sure people get what is coming to them. How different God is!

Ephesians 2:4-9 says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast. "

God wants to forgive us o much that he sent Christ to die in our place so that anyone who chose to could repent and be forgiven. Steve Brown said, I'm routinely puzzled by God's unusual choice of friends. God makes what seem to me some very funny choices—meaning, they're not necessarily the choices I would make. You see, I always thought God had a big house in which the people who did what He said could live, worship, and enjoy fellowship. On the outside were the people who didn't do what God said to do. I, of course, was on the inside, because I did what He said—or at least tried to. I figured my sincerity would give me a pass. But I was wrong.

God said to Moses in Exodus 33:19, "I will make all My goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you My name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (ESV).

In other words, God will choose His own friends, thank you very much. That has always bothered me. I'm beginning to learn that God makes, by my judgment, some weird choices. He loves people who drive me nuts, and He has mercy on people to whom I would not show mercy. He moves beyond religious institutions and befriends people with whom I would not be friends. I have a recurring dream in which I'm finally home in heaven and am sitting at the Lord's Table for the marriage supper of the Lamb. All kinds of people are there. Clergy persons are present, some leaders of the church, and even one or two television preachers. But as I look around, I also see former adulterers, liars, and thieves. There are one-time prostitutes and pimps, tax collectors and drunks. There are also those who were once homosexuals, pornographers, and gluttons. And, frankly, I'm shocked. Then, in my dream, I hear a voice from the throne, and the words are addressed to me. The voice is God's, and He asks, "And what do you think you're doing here?"

Miracles are a clear evidence that God does not act, think, or exist as we do. You see, God performs miracles for the simple fact that He can. He is not bound by the laws of gravity, entropy, or decay as we are in this world. God can feed the Israelites with manna for 40 years because He can. He can also step into His creation to provide a perfect sacrifice to Himself so that mankind might have the gift of salvation.

b) He sometimes allows his children to suffer so that he can bring blessing out of brokenness

God's purpose for Joseph in the Old Testament was to make him and the ruler of Egypt. But God knew that before he could be in the palace, he had a first of all be in the prison. God's purpose for Moses was that he would be the great leader of Israel who would lead the people out of bondage and he would receive the 10 commandments. But God knew that before Moses could be a leader, he had to be humbled by being a shepherd. God sees the big picture that includes not only earth that also eternity and sometimes he allows what we would call tragedies on earth in order to use us for eternal purposes.

It was the summer of 1967, and a young girl named Joni was riding horses near Chesapeake Bay. She decided to go for a swim and she dove into the shallow water, breaking her neck on a submerged rock. At first, Joni had a hard time reconciling her accident with the idea of a loving God. She was angry, demanding to know why this had happened to her. One day a friend told her, "Jesus knows how you feel. He was paralyzed. He couldn't move or change position on the cross. He was paralyzed by the nails." Joni began to understand God is a God of love, even when tragedy strikes in our lives. Today, God is using Joni Erickson Tada to touch others.

She once received a letter from an angry young man who had been in an accident. He was bitter at God for allowing his to suffer. He had written to Joni asking the big question: WHY? After relating some of her own feelings of bitterness and questioning, Joni wrote:

If God decided to explain all His ways to me, what makes me think I would be able to understand them? It would be like pouring million-gallon truths into my one-ounce brain. Didn't one Old Testament author write, "As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things" (Ecclesiastes 11:5)? In fact, the whole book of Ecclesiastes was written to convince people like me that only God holds the keys to unlocking the mysteries of life and that He's not loaning them all out! If God's mind was small enough for me to understand, He wouldn't be God! Yet, in spite of this, He has chosen to have a personal relationship with me—that's the greatest mystery of all! (A Step Further, p. 173)

4. GOD IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE HE NEVER CHANGES

We live in a world of constant change. Knowledge is increasing at a pace like never before in the history of the world. About a year ago we were given some extra money, and we decided to use that money to buy a new television set. I did research on what would be best to buy and asked people who knew what they were talking about on the subject. And there was that final day when we pulled the trigger on the transaction and came home with a new television set. We were excited. We got all the wires plugged in at the right places, and the television set was up and going. One of the first things I saw on the new television was an advertisement for new television technology that is going to take the place of what we had just bought. When I saw that, I said to Beth, "our television is now outdated." If you buy a new computer today, it'll be outdated next year. That's the way it is in the world that we live in. Everything is changing.

I might add the fact that you and I are in the change mode ourselves. If you haven't noticed, you're getting older. Someone has said that old age is "when it takes longer to rest than to get tired." Someone else and old age is "when your mind makes contracts your body can't keep."

God is not like to that. He'd never get tired because he is the source of his own energy. He doesn't have to eat, drink water or rest or sleep. He is totally independent of anyone or anything.

Malachi 3: 6, "I the Lord do not change."

That fact should give us real peace and comfort because we know that in a changing world where anything can happen at any time, there is one constant unchanging reality—the reality of God.

That's why I think it is funny to see pictures of God as this old man, with a flowing white beard and wrinkles on His face. God doesn't change, He doesn't live in our world where everything ages, He is the same all the time because He lives outside of time.

Final thoughts

1. Don't determine what is right by what is usual

It is so easy for us to adapt to that which surrounds us. It's like getting into a swimming pool. You put your foot in the water, and it appears to be freezing. You just don't know how you're going to be able to stand it, but what happens when you are in the pool for a few minutes? It begins to seem normal. You're no longer cold. The same thing happens to us in the world that we live in. If you're not very careful and sensitive, what is the usual in this world can appear to be normal and even right, but it is not. During World War 2 in Germany the persecution and extermination of Jews was the normal thing, but it was not the right thing. The right thing is not what appears to be usual and normal. The right thing is what God has said. We need to say what the psalm writer in

Psalm 119: 18-19, "Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law. I am but a foreigner here on earth; I need the guidance of your commands....."

2. Live your life by those things that will last forever.

When I was a child, I collected and played with plastic army man. I can still remember the excitement of buying a new group of army men. And when I was playing with those plastic men, it seemed like the most important thing in a line at the time. Now it means nothing. And so it is with the many things that seem so important to us now. Any turning to the, those things will be nothing.

1 John 2: "17And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever."

And what things last forever? The Glory you give to God through your changed life than honors him will last forever. The ministry you do the changes other people's lives will last forever. The worship that you give to God to praise that you get his name-the sayings will last forever. Don't spend your time with a plastic army man in your life. Live for eternity.

3. Look forward to the time when the unusual will become the usual

When it comes to God, what is unusual on earth is usual in heaven. Today, such things as sin, sickness and grief, stress our normal. One day, they will not be, one day, the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of God, and his blessings will be everywhere.