

Our Unusual God: Part 2

I read an interesting article last week about a robot that has been created in Japan.

Robot helps with breakfast

Japanese scientists have developed a robot that can help people get out of bed and bring them their breakfast.

They claim the 4ft 10ins robot, which has soft hands and fingers, can become even more like its human inventors. The Japanese humanoid - called Twenty one - has enough strength to support humans as they sit up and stand, and can make supple movements that respond to human touch. It can pick up a loaf of bread without crushing it, serve toast, help lift people out of bed and even lend a hand with the housework. Shigeki Sugano, professor of mechanical engineering at Waseda University, Tokyo, said: "In our super-ageing society, both strength and delicacy are required for robots. Twenty-One is the first robot that can meet those conditions." Twenty-One is designed to help around the house in a country with an ageing population. The professor said his team aims to have the robot on sale by 2015.

Observing a robot take care of people would certainly be an unusual thing. It is not expected. It is out of the ordinary. That is the way it is with God. We serve a God who is certainly unusual by human standards. That's where we often have problems. We expect God to act like we think He should act and are disappointed when He doesn't. We've got to learn to let God be God. We've got to understand that God is not who we think He is. God is who He says He is. We need to remember that it was God who created us in His image and not the other way around.

It is better to have no opinion of God at all than such as one as is unworthy of him; for the one is only unbelief--the other is contempt. --Plutarch

1. God exists in a different form than we do

If he is the creator and we are the created, that is to be expected. We saw last week the fact that God is the eternal spirit who created everything out of nothing. He is the one who has no limitations and is in need of nothing. The center of his being is everywhere, and his circumference is nowhere. He is all knowing, all powerful and unchanging. He is the one that we can always count on when there's no one else to count on.

2. God is unusual because he thinks differently than we do

Albert Einstein once said, "I want to know God's thoughts...the rest are details."

John MacDuff, 1864 said, "There are times when God's dealings with His people are perplexing—His thoughts very deep—His ways past finding out."

He was right. The Bible tells us that God's thoughts and his ways are above are ways as the heavens are above the earth, and sometimes we don't understand what He is doing in our lives.

3. God is unusual because his ways are different than ours

One of the ways God is different from us is the fact that he is eager to forgive. God offers forgiveness, and we hold on to our grudges. Another thing God does that totally blows our mind is the fact that God uses bad to produce good. Stories about that fact can be multiplied forever. Colonel Bringle of the Salvation Army became a very popular author. He came out of Harvard with honors and began his ministry on a street corner in Boston One drunk man threw a brick at him and hit him in the head. He received a concussion that put him in the hospital for months. During his recuperation, he wrote a book called "help to holiness. He added four volumes, and these devotional aids have been sold in large numbers around the world. He said, "My brethren, if there had never been a brick, there never would have been a book." His bad experience opened up doors he never would have had otherwise.

4. GOD IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE HE PERMITS EVIL IN HIS WORLD

What would you do if you were God, and you knew that she could prevent all evil from happening in this world? I would put a big sign in the sky that said, "No evil permitted. Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of divine law."

God allows evil to exist because he has endowed every member of the human race with a free will. Had he so chosen, God could have installed a computer chip in your brain and programmed it in such a way that there would never be a possibility that you would ever do anything wrong. He could have installed a keypad on your back and programmed your behavior every minute of the day. But he couldn't do that and give man a free will. And it is only when we have free will and personally choose God that we can glorify him as we should.

5. GOD IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE HE SOMETIMES MAKES US WAIT FOR SOMETHING THAT WE THINK WE NEED IMMEDIATELY

If I were God and I saw one of my children stressed out over something that I could provide for them immediately, I probably would do so. That is not always the way God works.

One man wrote, “Some how as a child I got the idea—probably from Sunday school and [Bible story books](#)— that the Bible was God's promise book. Not ordinary promises mind you, but 100-percent-guaranteed lifetime-warranty, you-must-be-completely-satisfied-or-your-money-back, over-night delivery promises. And so, as a first-grader, I prayed for a pony for my birthday . . . and didn't get it. I prayed for a pony for Christmas . . . and didn't get it. Right through junior high school, my prayer wasn't answered. In junior high, I prayed my face would clear up. It didn't clear up in high school or in college. And, today, I still don't have a pony and I still have acne! What happened to those "ask and ye shall receive" and "you will be given more than you can think or imagine" promise verses? And what about those [TV evangelists](#) who tell us to "name it and claim it"? Perhaps the problem is not with God's promises but that God doesn't deliver by FedEx overnight guaranteed next-day delivery. I've found that: God is never late . . . but He sure is slow.”

Habakkuk 2:2: “Slowly, steadily, surely the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled.”

Sometimes God does answer faster than email on high speed cable. In Matthew 8, we a number of immediate answers to prayer:

Matthew 8:1-3 “A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.”

Matthew 8:5-8, “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. Verse 13, “Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would. And his servant was healed at that very hour.”

Matthew 8:14-15, “When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. 15 He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.”

God does sometimes answer very quickly, but many times he answers slower than we would like. Most of the time he is slower than the deadlines we impose upon him. There are at least 4 reasons that He ignores our deadlines.

a) To increase our faith

We would all like to see God doing great miracles in answer to our prayers 5 minutes after we ask them, and there is no doubt that those answers would strengthen our faith. The truth is, however, that exciting miracles probably do not increase our faith near as much as waiting on God when our deadline has been passed. It is often during that long

time between the human deadline and the heavenly deliverance our faith grows the most. It is during those times that our faith is stretched and we focus our attention upon God with all of our hearts and strength.

“Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him (Isaiah 30:18).”

b) To increase our testimony

We would love for things to go quickly and easily in our lives, but that is not the kind of circumstance that usually gets someone's attention. It is when we go through those long times of waiting and even of suffering that people began to take notice, not only of our difficulties but also of our faith.

For example, the story of the three Jewish men in a fiery furnace would not have been nearly as powerful if Meshack, Shadrach and Abedigo simply overpowered the guards and highjacked a chariot. Some how "Daniel and the in the City Jail" just doesn't have the impact of "Daniel in the Lions Den."

I'm not impressed with the TV evangelists and their guests who talk about their health and wealth "God loves you and has a wonderful Porsche for your life." I *am* impressed with testimonies of believers going through absolute defeat and have come out with victory: maybe not with health and wealth, but have come out with the assurance of Christ's presence every step. To me, that's a great testimony.

c) To increase our compassion

Compassion for others is usually a product of our own experience with pain. Paul writes in

2 Corinthians 1:3-6: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

I never had the capacity to sympathize with those in the hospital until I ended up there myself. My sickness changed the way I relate to those in pain. If you sometimes feel that you have gone through Parental Purgatory, you will have much more compassion for other people in the same situation.

When God is slow in answering your prayer, it is not that he did not hear you. Neither is it that he does not care. The truth is he is doing something in your life that is more important than the things you are asking for.

d) TO PREPARE US FOR THE BLESSING WE ARE ASKING FOR

Sometimes we ask God for something that He really wants for us. In fact, He may want it for us more than we want it. The problem is that He knows we are not ready to receive it. We are not prepared. It would be like your 8 year old son asking you if he can drive himself to school every morning. It's not that you don't want him to drive-you just know that he is not ready yet. It is common for us to mistakenly interpret God's delays for unwillingness on His part. If it is for your good and His glory, keep on asking until He makes it plain that the thing you're asking for is not His will.

5. GOD IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE HE SOMETIMES WITHOLDS OUR GREATEST DESIRES

Not only is God sometimes slow in answering our prayers, sometimes He never gives us what we ask for. Why is that? We do everything we know to do to line up with his will. We confess every sin that we can think of, but he still does not answer. The question is "why?" The simple answer is that God knows that what we are asking for is not best for us .

One man said, "Strange as it may sound, we need unanswered prayer. It is God's gift to us because it protects us from ourselves. If all our prayers were answered, we would only abuse the power. We would use prayer to change the world to our liking, and it would become hell on earth. Like spoiled children with too many toys and too much money, we would only grab for more. We would pray for victory at the expense of others; we would be intoxicated by power. We would hurt other people and exalt ourselves."

The country-and-western singer Garth Brooks once recorded a song and called "Unanswered prayers" in which he sees a former girlfriend, the woman he thought would be his partner for life, and realizes how much richer a love he has with his wife. It will only be when we get to heaven that we will truly understand all God has protected us from by not answering some of our prayers.

Action points

1. LEARN ALL THAT YOU CAN ABOUT GOD

If there he is a Supreme Being who made all things including us and if that Supreme Being has the power to bless our lives or not bless them, then surely we should learn all that we can about him.

2. WHEN GOD'S WAYS SEEM CONFUSING, AND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, TRUST AND OBEY

To understand is wonderful. To obey is better still. In the final analysis, the foundation of our obedience is not understanding because we will never understand enough. The

foundation of our obedience is our love for him and our trust in him. It was Spurgeon who said, "When you cannot trace his hand, trust his heart."

Scott Wesley Brown's song
"When Answers Aren't Enough There Is Jesus"
You have faced mountains of desperation.
You have climbed, you have fought, you have won.
But this valley that lies coldly before you,
Casts a shadow you cannot overcome.

Just when you thought you had it all together.
You knew every verse to get you through.
But this time all the sorrow broke more than just your heart.
And reciting all those verses just won't do.

When answers aren't enough, there is Jesus.
He is more than just an answer to your prayer.
And your heart will find a safe and peaceful refuge.
When answers aren't enough, He is there.

3. FOCUS MORE ON HIS GLORY THAN YOU DO ON YOUR NEED

Psalm 111:3, "Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever."

One of the things that often confuses us about God is the fact that His actions don't revolve around our needs. In other words, we are not the center of what He is all about—His glory is. That's because the ultimate need we have is not the pressing problem we are facing. The ultimate need we have and always will have is to know God for who He is and what He is like. That means we have to understand His glory. God knows that if we are to live a truly blessed life, it will not be because we are continually focused on our needs. We are the happiest and most blessed when we are focused on His glory and sharing it with others.

Psalm 138:5, "May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great."

There is no way that any of us can make God any more glorious than He already is. Our calling is to make His glory known to others by the way we live for Him and respond to His work in our lives. That is what life is all about. We pray to have our needs met, but our primary focus should be that God will be glorified. Once you catch the vision of a great and awesome God and get lost in the desire to bring him Glory, everything else will take on new meaning.

4. NEVER LOSE THE WONDER OF IT ALL

When I was about 13 years old, my parents took me to six flags over Texas. I still remember the wonder of it all. It was as though I had stepped out of my world and into another. That is the way the Christian life should be lived. We should live in wonder of a God who answers prayer and who seeks to bless us. We should live in wonder of a God who wants to walk with us through the valleys and who is wise enough as to even say no at times. It is this wonder that caused Paul to say in

Romans 11:33," Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge!