

Our Unusual God: Part 4

Every once in a while, you run across someone or something that is truly unusual. That person or thing is not what we are used to. Some months ago, we saw a television program that featured the story of a man named Daniel Paul Tammet. Daniel is a British high-functioning autistic savant gifted with a facility for mathematical calculations, sequence memory, and natural language learning. In his mind, he says, each number up to 10,000 who can see the results of calculations as landscapes. He is so good at mathematical equations that he can sit for hours multiplying unbelievably large equations that computers can't even keep up with. Tammet holds the European record for memorizing and recounting pi to 22,514 digits in just over five hours. He also speaks a variety of languages including English, French, Finnish, German, Spanish, Lithuanian, Romanian, Estonian, Icelandic, Welsh and Esperanto. He is capable of learning new languages very quickly. To prove this for the Channel Five documentary, Tammet was challenged to learn Icelandic in one week. Seven days later he appeared on Icelandic television conversing in Icelandic, with his Icelandic language instructor saying it was "not human."

There are a lot of unusual, out of the ordinary things in this world but none are as unusual as our god. He is unusual because he does things that we would not expect him to do, and last week we saw that he is unusual with regard to what he considers to be a blessed life. If you were to ask people what they considered to be a blessed life, you would get a lot of different opinions, but most of them would equate blessing with what seems to be outwardly beneficial. As we have been seeing, that is not the whole story. The greatest blessings are those which are inward. Jesus made that plain when he taught what is called the Beatitudes' in Matthew five.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit

The poor in spirit are those people who have come to the place where they recognize their spiritual inadequacy. These are not proud people. They are humble, and they recognize their spiritual poverty before god. They understand god to be sovereign, and they understand themselves to be spiritually needy, spiritually bankrupt and destitute. These are people who depend up on god.

2. Blessed are those who mourn

This statement logically follows the first one because when you see yourself being spiritually empty, spiritually destitute, when you recognize your sin, you mourn over that sin. This is not the kind of mourning that takes place in our world because of the hard trials we may endure. It is not because you did something wrong and got caught and are now remorseful. This is mourning that takes place in the form of godly repentance.

3. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Most people seem to think that meek means weak, a spineless person without any backbone. According to Bill Farmer's newspaper column, J. Upton Dickson was a fun-loving fellow who said he was writing a book entitled Cower Power. He also founded a group of submissive people. It was called DOORMATS. That stands for "Dependent Organization Of Really Meek And Timid Souls -- if there are no objections." Their motto was: "The meek shall inherit the earth -- if that's okay with everybody." Their symbol was the yellow traffic light. That's not what the word means. Meekness is 'an attitude of humility toward God and gentleness toward people, springing from a recognition that God is in control.

People in our world fight with one another. They curse one another and try to overpower one another with their harsh words in order to gain material possessions. Jesus said when I come back and establish my kingdom on earth, I'm going to give it to the gentle. Make necessary strength of gentleness about it.

1. MEEKNESS IS HAVING THE ABILITY TO ENDURE NEGATIVE PEOPLE WITHOUT RETALIATION

We have all seen dogs barking at one another. One dog barks, and the other dog barks back. That is the way it is with most people. If someone barks at you and, you bark back in them. That is not the way it is with a meek person. The meek person is able to bear up under the wrongs done to him because he is being controlled by the spirit of god. Meekness is not the same as having a weak, passive personality. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is described in one lexicon as 'the quiet and friendly composure which does not become embittered or angry at what is unpleasant, whether in the form of people or fate.'

The word translated "meek" occurs only three other times in the New Testament ([Matthew 11:29](#); [21:5](#); [1 Peter 3:4](#)). In all three other places, it is translated "gentle."

To be gentle is the opposite of being arrogant or harsh. The truth is anyone can be harsh. Is not hard it all-just do what comes natural. On the other hand, it takes to reel in word strength to be gentle especially when people are not being gentle with you. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul described his ministry as being "gentle."

1 Thessalonians 2:7, "But we proved to be £gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."

When I read that verse, I think of a mother in the hospital carefully and gently holding her newborn infant. In a world where it seems to be a virtue to be harsh, Jesus said I want those and my kingdom and the gentle. The word "meek" is a picture of "power under control." It is used of bridling a horse, or taming a wild animal. Picture yourself

being in a horse show. Passing by you one by one are these a massive horses. And every time they take a step, their muscles ripple so that they are a living study in anatomy. Which horse will win the show? Everything else being equal, the winning horse will be the one who is most under the control of its master. So when we talk about a meek person, we're talking about and one whose life has been brought under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and God is in control of his or her life.

There is no question that Jesus was strong. He was strong enough to be able to say, all power is given unto me and have and on and earth." Yet, at the same time, he was meek. He said

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29 (KJV).

1 Peter 2:29, "21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;"

It is not that Jesus could not do anything about those who were slandering him and mocking him. He had the power to wipe them all out in an instant, but His power was under control. That's what meekness is. Meekness is having the power to retaliate with force but choosing not to do it. It is power under control.

2. MEEKNESS IS HAVING THE ABILITY TO ACCEPT NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WITH A JOYFUL SPIRIT

"Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3).

His meekness was shown in his acceptance of what God ordained, including endless battles with the rebellious people he was trying to lead from Egypt to Canaan. We can also see the meekness of Moses in Exodus 18:13-23. Moses was literally wearing himself out trying to help everyone solve their problems. He never complained or even gave thought to what this was doing to him. He willing bore the problems of everyone else on his own shoulders. Moses' meekness is a demonstration of strength. He carried burdens that would cause most of us to crumble, but he never complained – not even to God! Even when God told him he couldn't go into the Promised Land, he accepted it without complaining. Meekness means accepting what comes, knowing that it comes from the hand of God who orders all things.

4. BLESSED ARE THE HUNGRY

⁶ *Blessed and are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.*

The starting point in all achievement is desire. Weak desire brings weak results, just as a small amount of fire makes a small amount of heat. The key to will power is want power. People who want something badly enough can usually find the will power to achieve it. Jesus said it is that way in the spiritual life. The people who grow spiritually, the people who get close to God are those who hunger to do so. When someone says, "I don't have time for devotions, he is mistaken. His problem is not a time management problem. His problem is a hunger problem. When you are hungry, you don't have to find time to eat.. Hungry people don't wait for food to happen upon them. When you are hungry, you adjust your life to make time for a meal.

When Jesus says "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst, He's talking about the two most intense longings of the human body. We all know what it feels like to be really hungry or really thirsty. In

Matthew 5:6, Jesus is saying "Blessed are those whose craving for the things of God is just as intense as the craving for food and water. Blessed are those who are hungry to know God better, to live in His presence and to live holy lives."

The Bible gives us examples of people who were hungry for God.

Moses' first encounter with God was at a bush that was on fire, but it wasn't consumed. He took off his shoes and got on his face before God. Later he sees God perform ten plagues on Egypt, and Moses leads Hebrews out of bondage without a shot being fired. Moses raised the rod of God into the air and saw the Red Sea split and a million plus people crossover on dry land. He saw the glory of God's presence represented in a pillar of fire at night and a cloud during the day. He drank water that came from a flint rock and ate manna that came from heaven's ovens. After all of that, do you know what Moses said to the Lord? In Exodus 33:18, Moses is talking with God. He says,

"Lord, show me your glory! I know I just spent 40 days and 40 nights with you on Mount Sinai. I realize that I am the only one who has ever spoken with you face to face. But I'm so hungry for you that I just can't get enough! I want to experience you like I've never experienced you before!"

In Psalm 63, David is in the dry desert of Judah. Thinking about his circumstances, he says in vs 1, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and glory. Because your love is better than life, my

lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands."

Luke 19:1-10 tells us the story of a man named Zacchaeus who was hungry to see Jesus. The bible tells us that Zacchaeus was a tax collector, not a popular guy. When he heard that Jesus was coming to town, he went out to see him. The problem was there were so many people there and that he could not see the master. At that point, he could have given up and walk away with a pretty good excuse. But Zacchaeus didn't do that. He was not about to let the circumstances or other people stopped him from seeing Jesus. In fact, he wanted to see Jesus' so badly that he was willing to set aside his dignity to do it. He climbed up into a tree to see Jesus as he passed by. This man really wanted to see Jesus. Maybe our problem today is that we're not really hungry yet. When you become desperate for something, you are willing to take desperate means to obtain it.

As Zacchaeus was in that tree, Jesus looked up and called him by name. Why did Jesus call this man by name and not others? Because Zacchaeus was hungry for Jesus. Most of the others were there because they wanted to see a miracle or to receive something else. Never lose sight of this principle: the amount of your emptiness determines the amount of your filling. God is looking for growling stomachs. He is looking for people whose spiritual insides are rumbling for him.

Do you have the hunger and thirst for Jesus you did when you were saved or maybe just a few years back? Paul said that it is possible; as our bodies grow weaker with age our spirit for Christ can grow stronger. Does that describe your Christian journey? Today, you are more desirous for God than you were in the past?

Mike Benson tells how one night, as his family was finishing dinner, his eight-year-old daughter left six green beans on her plate. She normally ate her veggies, and Mike did not usually allow this sort of thing to bother him, but this night he was irked and said to her, "Eat your green beans."

She replied, "Dad, I'm full to the top."

"You won't pop," he responded.

"Yes, I will pop!" she said.

"Risk it!" he said. "It will be okay."

"Dad, I could not eat another bite."

Mike knew that night they were having her favorite dessert, pumpkin pie squares. So he asked, "How would you like a double helping of pumpkin pie squares with two dollops of whipped cream on top?"

"That sounds great!" she responded as she pushed her plate back, ready for dessert.

"How can you have room for a double helping of pumpkin pie squares with two dollops of whipped cream, and not have room for six measly green beans?"

She stood up tall out of her chair and pointing to her belly said, "This is my vegetable stomach. This is my meat stomach. They are both full. Here is my dessert stomach. It is empty. I am ready for dessert!"

What we eat reveals what we hunger for.

How do we become hungry for God?

1. Cry out to God for help.

John 6:35 says "Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and He who believes in Me will never be thirsty." Cry out to God for help.

2. Back off a little on the spiritual junk food

When was the last time you sat down on the sofa, turned off the TV and opened up the Bible? When was the last time you turned off the car radio on the way to work so you could have a conversation with the Lord? When was the last time you turned off your cell phone and called out to God and asked Him, "Can you hear me now?" I love

Isaiah 55:2. It says "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

Back off a little on the spiritual junk food, and leave some room for the rich fare of God's word.

3. HAVE REGULAR SPIRITUAL WORKOUTS

If god is who the bible says that he is, why do we often have so little hunger for him? Could it be that we're not doing any spiritual exercise? If you've ever run track or done some other form of physical exercise, you know that working out can make you hungry. So many American Christians come to church weekly but never have any spiritual exercise. We're like someone who joins a health club, goes out and buys new expensive jogging shoes, new shorts and workout shirt. And what do we do with those items? We study every week on a Sunday morning as to how to use them. And after all those classes, we were to know how to use the equipment. In fact, we could easily tell someone else how to use the equipment. We just don't use it ourselves. In a recent survey the majority of Christians in America admitted they hadn't witnessed to one person in the course of an entire year. Our biggest workout is to come to church on Sunday morning. It's no wonder that we're not hungry.

4. Force feed yourself

Fellowship Bible Church

Pastor: Don Griffin

Sometimes when someone is really sick, he doesn't want to eat. He is just not hungry. That's when someone has to urge him to eat because if he doesn't force feed himself, he will never be hungry. Being hungry spiritually is a result of being fed spiritually. The more you take in spiritual food, the more you'll want to more. God wants his word to be like water and sinks deep down into the soil. The problem is that some people's heart is so hard that the spiritual rain of the word cannot penetrate it. That is when you have to continue soaking yourself and spiritual things until the ground of your heart is soft and ready to receive the word.

Before the era of mandatory seatbelts you could always tell which couples were in love and which ones weren't. The distance indicated something. Many of God's children are content to ride in the car with the Lord, but they want to keep their distance. God isn't interested in simply having a legal contract with you or me. He wants a love relationship with us, and He wants you and me to be hungry for that same thing.