

MISUNDERSTOOD

“Born in the USA” is NOT “The Boss” Springsteen’s flag-waver. No, it’s a discouraged vet, dying to hear someone say “Thank you.”

"Every Breath You Take" by the Police is NOT a dreamy ballad, as some think. It’s bitterness-gone-wild, penned during Sting’s divorce:

***Oh, can't you see you belong to me
How my poor heart aches with every step you take
Every move you make, every vow you break
Every smile you fake, every claim you stake
I'll be watching you.***

"In The Air Tonight" is NOT Phil Collins’ *mea culpa* of seeing his brother drown as he looks on, despite accusations by urban legends.

Bobby Darin’s "Mac the Knife" is classic misperception. Mac’s no Ratpack heartbreaker. Hardly! Murder and mayhem appear when that lurking shark, MacHeath, glides back in town:

***There's a tugboat, down by the river don'tcha know
Where a cement bag's just a'drooppin' on down
Oh, that cement is just, it's there for the weight, dear
Five'll get ya ten old Macky's back in town
Now d'ja hear 'bout Louie Miller? He disappeared, babe,
After drawin' out all his hard-earned cash
And now MacHeath spends just like a sailor
Could it be our boy's done somethin' rash?***

Urging his staff to strive for clarity, Seattle ad legend Don Kraft often warned, “Nobody ever gets the message.” We can be misread or misquoted, thereby polluting relationships that inflict pain for years. Being misunderstood is the pits. So, today’s Big Question is:

When you’ve been misunderstood, or when you misunderstand someone else, how do you handle it? Have you found ways to repair misunderstandings? (DISCUSS)

Misunderstood, Mistaken or Manipulated?

Misunderstandings are as old as dirt. Job was the richest, most influential, godliest person on earth 40 centuries ago. When God allowed Satan to strip him of family, wealth and health, Job’s “friends” slathered on the guilt, saying he’d done the mother of all sins, and God was steamed. But they got it all wrong.

Fast-forward 2,000 years to when Jesus' motives were twisted in epic proportions. The Sunday before Passover He rode into Jerusalem where thousands of pilgrims had convened for this holy season.

They tossed branches in His path, shouting "Hosanna," or "Save us from Roman occupation!" But the sinless Lamb of God had come to be the Sacrifice for sins, not the national liberator they sought.

What or who do people today want Jesus to be? (DISCUSS)

Crossed Up For Good

Speaking through His prophet Isaiah 700 years B.C., God described how His Son would appear, impaled, crucified as our Suffering Savior. **Let's read Isaiah 53:1-12, p. 552.**

Why doesn't God clear up all misunderstandings about Himself by simply telling us, once and for all, who He is and how He wants us to relate with Him? (DISCUSS)

"See Ya In Court, Bro!"

Should FOJ's (friends of Jesus) haul each other before a judge? **Let's read I Corinthians 6:1-8, p. 850.**

"God to Earth: 'Let Me Be Perfectly Clear'"

Paul knew what it was to be called a fool for Jesus. As young Saul of Tarsus, he was torturing Christ's followers. But after he gave the resurrected Christ his life, and his old name, Paul was now misunderstood while *servicing* Jesus. **Let's read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, p. 848.**

Bo knows football, and Jesus knows misunderstanding, warning His disciples that they too would be misread. All but one was martyred. **Let's read Jesus' prophetic words in John 15:18-25, p. 804.**

We all feel misunderstood at times. But Paul says, "What we KNOW trumps how we FEEL." **Let's read Philippians 2:1-11, p. 873.**

Who was the target of history's biggest misunderstanding? **We get the story in Mark 15:1-39, p. 758.**

How can we resolve misunderstandings? Let's zoom in on the official logo of being misunderstood: the cross. **Turn to Luke 23:32-47, p. 787.**

"All roads lead to Rome" has long been the slogan for those who insist that there are many, wide thoroughfares to God. Call it heaven's version of the Eurorail Pass. But

according to God's Word, that is a fatal misunderstanding. King Solomon cautions us in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that *seems* right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Here "death" means being separated from God forever in an eternal fire the Bible calls "hell."

Hey, it *seems* logical that St. Peter would validate our permanent parking stub by our being good, or doing good. Lots of things *seem* theologically sound, so we shop around for a belief system that "fits our lifestyle," or "meets my needs." *USA Today* found that Americans' second most significant spiritual influence is Oprah.

Life is a True/False exam, and what God tells us in the Bible, not in any other supplement or so-called prophetic voice, is our only safeguard against deception.

In His famous "Sermon on the Mount" (no, it wasn't delivered on horseback!), Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). He added, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father (God) except through me." If this were not so, why would He have subjected Himself to the cross!

Because Christ has forgiven us of *all* our sins, we can forgive those who hurt us. As we do so, we get a very small taste of what God has done in offering us a clean slate with Him, 100% guilt-free!

It begins by receiving God's forgiveness, trusting Him with your life. Then you have the freedom to give others that same unearned favor that you've received from the great Grace-giver. Have you embraced God's generous invitation yet, signaling Him to apply His mercy to your account? No? Then just tell Him now:

"I have nothing to offer You, God, except my sins and sincere thanks for loving me so much that you had Your Son Jesus trade His life for my sin debt. I humbly accept Your forgiveness right now, and step into our new, personal kinship from this moment forward and forever. Jesus, please help me start forgiving others because You've lavished Your forgiveness on me. Whom shall I forgive first? Amen."

His Deal

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