



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

JEREMIAH 31:33B-34

March 2023

GOD HAS HIS WAYS

For a relationship to flourish, each person must know how the other sees it. In the greatest relationship mankind can have—with God, we should know how He views it.

Husbands have notoriously been astounded to discover that their wives didn't view their bringing home flowers as adequate make-up for forgetting an anniversary or other special event. Some husbands can't understand why their wives don't care about the new car with all the newest technology but seem to obsess about the garbage being taken out on time. Knowing another's ways is essential to a growing and life-giving relationship. For a relationship

to flourish, each person must know how the other sees it. In the greatest relationship mankind can have—with God, we should know how He views it.

Peter Lord was a cherished mentor to me and many others. He would often say: "Wouldn't it be a shame to spend your life making God an apple pie only to discover at the end that He didn't like or want apple pie?" So, can we know His ways? Have we pro-

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jected some ways onto Him that are not accurate? Are we frustrated because He won't respond the way we expect to our actions?

*From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
You meet him who joyfully works
righteousness, those who remember
you in your ways. Behold, you were
angry, and we sinned; in our sins we
have been a long time, and shall we
be saved?*

Isaiah 64:4-5 ESV

As Isaiah implies, mankind does not have the capacity to assess God's ways. All other gods, which are some form of projection from the human heart, demand that we work for them. The God of the Bible works for those who wait for Him. It takes some getting used to, but He has clearly shown the pattern of His ways. He is a covenant-making God. He is the one who initiates every relationship with people. No person ever seeks an intimate relationship with Jehovah. Every person seeks

to make a god they can know and control.

From reading the narrative of scripture, we learn that God has always wanted a full fellowship, partnership, and intimacy that is heart to heart. In the Garden of Eden, He made a promise that the seed of woman would crush the head of the Serpent. He alone would make that happen. He would not fail. He would use human instrumentality to defeat the forces of evil on the same ground humans were defeated by evil. After the earth became so wicked it deserved to be destroyed, He made a promise to Noah that He would not destroy the earth with a flood again, but that humans would have an ordered world where they would have time to see the fulfillment of His promise. Then He found Abram and made a covenant with him that his family line would be the one through which the curse would be canceled and the blessing restored upon the earth. Later He made a covenant with Moses as

representative of Israel telling him how to live according to the ways of God. In this covenant we see the pattern more clearly. First, God declares His heart and the work He has done: "I delivered you from Egypt. I fed you with angels' food. I defeated your enemies..." Then He gave Moses the details of how to live with God in a community that has His identity and His mission (see Exodus 19-20). Israel tried to live within this covenant but ultimately proved that sinful humans cannot fully align with the ways of God without a new heart.

After they had failed in their efforts and were under oppression from godless kingdoms, God spoke through the prophets reminding them that He had made a covenant and would get it done. Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant in a new day that would remedy the heart problem:

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me. From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:33b-34, ESV

The new covenant is internal and depends on heartfelt trust. It is personal. People know God Himself as a person and interact with Him in life. Sin in all its forms is taken out of the equation. Forgiveness is established. God never revisits forgiven sin. People are free to be themselves with Him knowing that He loves the needy and will not fail to continue to work to conform us into His image for more intimacy and partnership. The author of Hebrews states that this promised new covenant came when Jesus came. It is in effect now (see Hebrews 8:7-13). We now

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live under the dictates of that covenant. It is so radically merciful that we struggle with it. Can God be that merciful? The early church struggled with it.

Much of the writings of the New Testament is about the conflict the religious leaders had with the good news preached by the apostles. Paul wrote several letters addressing this very problem. We still try to relate to God based on our projections of what He wants. We often say we want to please Him when what we are really saying is that we are trying to appease Him. Pleasing Him means living according to His covenant that was purchased by the blood of Jesus. He has done everything necessary to restore humans to original design and destiny. Just like there was fruit for every possible desire on the trees in the Garden of Eden, there is grace for every need and legitimate desire in us now. God has declared: "I have done...." What is the proper response? "Thank You!"

Living according to the ways of God means living in thanksgiving. At all times, for all things and in all things. Thanksgiving produces joy. Joy produces delightful obedience. God also says: "I will do...." What is our response? "I believe and align my reality to yours."

He insists that His ways are higher and better than ours. It is our challenge to accept His reality as our reality and live accordingly. He has His ways, and He is not changing. We are so glad.



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