



What Do You Do About Disappointment? What's Been Your Greatest Disappointment This Past Year?

The summer before my sophomore year in high school I fell in love with basketball. It became my great passion. I played it every day for as long as I could...often until well after dark. By my junior year, I made it my goal to make the varsity basketball team my senior year. I spent hours lifting weights, jumping rope with ten pound ankle weights and playing whoever I could find out on the basketball courts. My fingers became cracked and often bled due to the amount of time I spent shooting. I quit doing any homework because I was dedicating myself completely to making the team. Although I was not very athletic and when I started could not jump, the weeks leading up to the tryouts I was able to dunk with two hands. I was primed to be one of the few ever to make the varsity basketball team without ever having played on an organized team. The coach let three of us tryout and for a week we worked out with the varsity players. On Friday, he pulled us aside and let us know that none of us, who had not played for the San Leandro High School teams before made the cut. I knew I probably did not have a shot, not because I felt like I wasn't good enough but due to my never having played on a coached team before. I did not cry but I was thoroughly disappointed. It took me three years before I really got over the failure to make the team. What I later realized was that basketball had become my identity and a part of me died the day I was left off the basketball team.

Disappointment will affect you in different ways. Each disappointment is different and its impact on your life varies from situation to situation. There are times when you may feel like crying and other times you shake it off as if it is nothing. Disappointment though is never nothing. It always alters you in some way. The water of a stream passing over a pebble may not seem to do much to it but it is having its impact whether it is seen or not. Disappointment comes in many different forms. Aesop told the story of a horse that had been a charger ridden by fierce warriors into battle. Now he was old and creaky and was put to work in a mill. No longer was the old war horse proudly stomping and striding heroically into battle but was rather working as a slave all day grinding corn. Complaining about his lot, the elderly steed moaned to the miller of how it longed for its previous glory. "I once was a splendid war horse happily living a wonderful life being cared for by a groom whose only duty was to take care of my wants. I wish I never gave up the battlefield for the mill." The miller replied with biting insight, "It's no use your regretting the past. Life has many ups and downs. You must just take them as they come."

When Cain realized that God did not "look with favor" upon the offering of Cain, his disappointment turned to rage and jealousy. **But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.** (Genesis 4: 4-5 NIV) Cain's brother Abel brought a gift to God that pleased the Lord and Cain's fury became murderous and he killed Abel. For some, disappointment leads to simmering rage that can become violent. Many take out their disappointment on others...their wives, husbands, children, or friends. You may have done this yourself; not killing anyone but being snarky or grumpy when it is your disappointment fueling your bad behavior. Perhaps you have treated someone badly when that person had nothing to do with why you were upset. Sin often gets the best of us like it did for Cain when we are disappointed.

We see something similar with Miriam, the sister of Moses. For whatever reason she felt like she didn't get the respect she deserved among the Israelites. Miriam and her brother Aaron talked badly about Moses to whoever would listen, complaining about him marrying a Cushite but their complaint went far beyond that one concern. It was much more to do with the disappointment they each had not being honored as they felt they deserved. **"Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken**

through us?" And the Lord heard this. (Numbers 12: 2 NIV) Disappointment can act like a poison psychologically. Although it was both Miriam and Aaron who went around complaining about Moses, it must have been much more Miriam doing the griping for the Lord was quite stern with her. When you feel like you haven't been taken seriously or treated fairly, the natural tendency is to get upset and talk badly about those who you think are in the wrong. Disappointment can ruin friendships, family relationships as well as the fellowship of churches. I have known of congregations that split apart and died because of the poison disappointment brought. Members start talking badly about each other and the ruin of a church is close to happening.

Perhaps you never considered the disappointment of Thomas the disciple, but you need to give his situation some thought. Thomas was not there when the other disciples were met by Jesus raised from the dead. In the locked upper room where the disciples and others gathered to take refuge from the Jewish and Roman authorities, Jesus suddenly appeared, thoroughly alive and physically present. This stunning and thrilling evening Thomas missed. When the disciples joyfully told Thomas what had happened, he refused to believe them. Now, perhaps you like me have wondered why he did not accept their testimony. Why did he adamantly reject the account? What must be considered closely is how instantly Thomas changed his mind the moment Jesus appeared in the room the next Sunday they all were in the same place. **A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"** (John 20: 26-28 NIV) Perhaps it isn't surprising to you but it is to me how quickly Thomas believed it really was Jesus there in the room. There is no indication he even bothered touching the wounds which he adamantly insisted the previous week would be the only way he would believe Jesus was alive. Consider this and I think it fits perfectly with the human response to disappointment. Thomas refused to accept the report of his friends, not so much because he didn't trust them but rather mostly because he was disappointed he wasn't there too when it happened. How could it be so if he was left out of it? There are so many instances where even good Christians will reject a completely believable testimony mostly because they are jealous it did not happen to them. Disappointment can and does blind many to all the good God brings because they are so focused on what they don't have or what they think they should have that they miss the great parts of life.

Let's take a look at Moses and his response to disappointment. Moses was at the precipice of great success. Twelve spies had been sent to the land God promised them and it had to be with eager anticipation he looked forward to their return. Soon, he would be able to settle down and enjoy his new home with the rest of the nation of Israel. When the spies returned however, ten of them adamantly opposed trying to take the land, claiming the people who lived there were huge and terrifying warriors. The people believed them and refused to invade the land. Moses was left devastated. He met with God and the LORD told him that because of the rebellion of the people, they would have to wander in the hot desert for forty years, waiting for that generation to die. What a terrible blow that was. Moses' hopes and dreams for a bright future were dashed. Moses refused though to let disappointment wreck him. Instead, Moses found a fresh purpose in life. His new calling was to lead the next generation to gain lasting faith in God, build holy lives and learn to put into practice everything the Lord said was right and good. Rather than angrily giving up, bitterly rejecting the Israelites and abandoning them or questioning the goodness of God, Moses moved forward and took on the new challenges he faced. When you are disappointed and feel let down by others or even by God, follow the example of Moses. Believe God is good and what is ahead for you is even better than what you had before. Take to heart this beautiful promise of God. **Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.**" (Isaiah 49: 23 NIV) Each disappointment does not need to be your enemy. It can be an opportunity to grow, strengthen your character and make you better than ever as you find Christ there leading the way. Stubbornly hope in God and you will take a step forward in becoming perfect and complete.