

Referring to her boyfriend’s unfaithfulness to her, one woman expressed, “I don’t like disappointment. Wait, use HATE. ***I HATE DISAPPOINTMENT.*** There. Between anger and disappointment, which one would you choose? I pick anger.” How we handle disappointment tells us a lot about ourselves: what is important to us, what our expectations are, where our hopes and desires lie. Sometimes we do not define our responses in terms of disappointment because we choose anger instead. In anger we feel less victimized and powerless. We all know that feeling of let down. We have felt the sadness, frustration, coldness, and yes, anger because something or someone was not as good, true, responsive, or trustworthy as expected. We’ve experienced lost dreams, vanished hopes, and wasted efforts. But the bitterest disappointments of all are those in which people let us down.

The story of David reveals a man who battled disappointment his whole life. Young, talented, and courageous, he was destined to be a great leader. Yet his life was to be plagued by disappointment both in those whom he placed implicit trust and in himself.

Disappointment in *leadership*

Saul, the king of Israel, had David’s allegiance and complete devotion. Being one of his greatest warriors, “David went out wherever Saul sent him” (1 Samuel 18:4-5, NKJV). Placed in high position, David sought to prove worthy and faithful to his king. David subdued Saul’s enemies, fought his battles, and made him great. Yet, because of ignited jealousy, Saul turned on him. The man whom David had devoted his youthful energies to now literally sought to stab him in the back.

Disappointed in *love*

David was given Saul’s daughter, Michal, to be his wife. But during his long absence, fleeing from her father, she married another. While Scripture says she was given to another, why did she consent? A man who has served his country and returned to the comforts and love of home, only to find that his wife did not wait for him in faithfulness, knows how David must have felt.

Disappointed in *a team member*

Joab was David’s military leader. As commander, David had trusted him to carry out his orders and to dedicate his life to the good of the nation. But twice Joab irrevocably betrayed David’s wishes; murdering the man whom David was seeking to form an alliance with in order to unify the nation, and by killing the traitorous Absalom, David’s son.

Disappointed in *family*

What were the feelings of David who lost this son whom he loved in the full awareness that Absalom had led a rebellion against his own throne? Even on his deathbed, David could not trust his own flesh and blood. Another son, Adonijah, revolted and sought to take his crown.

Disappointed in *closest confidants*

Not only his sons, but also his closest confidants, friends, and chief advisors turned on David in these coups.



Disappointed in *self*

In regards to his sin in committing adultery and then having the husband of Bathsheba killed, David could say, “I am my greatest disappointment.” He betrayed his own sense of right—his own belief system. His regret and the consequences of his sin impacted the rest of his life.

Disappointed in *God*

When God immediately struck Uzzah down because he “put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. . . . David was displeased . . . and David was afraid of the Lord that day” (2 Samuel 6:6, 8-9). David was astonished, disillusioned, and shaken. He questioned God’s justice. How could God have done this?

Disappointed in *lost dreams*

Many cling to the hope of accomplishing some great work upon which their hearts are set. They will leave their mark on the world and be honored. David’s greatest ambition was to build a house for God, the temple. But his hopes were dashed to the ground. He was denied the privilege. “You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name” (1 Chronicles 22:8, NKJV).

Disappointment cannot be avoided in this world. But there is a way of greatly limiting its effects upon you and growing stronger in its wake. Consider three biblical principles that we can follow in dealing with let down.

- Don’t place your implicit trust in man, not even in yourself. In this context, trust is the opening of self to receive favor, to expect, hope, have assurance,
- and reliance in the character, ability, strength or truth of someone. Without some level of trust we could not function socially in the world. Yet the Bible says, “Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion” (Micah 7:5, NKJV). “Thus says the Lord, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord’” (Jeremiah 17:5).

This does not mean that we look at all with a suspicious eye, distrusting the mailman to bring our mail, a fellow co-worker to do their part of a job or a close friend with a secret. It means that for personal fulfillment, emotional

sustenance, assurance of stability, and spiritual guidance man is not to be trusted to provide all you need. To depend on man for our strength is to ask to be let down. There are a lot of hard-hearted men and women who have experienced pain at the hand of the very ones who should have been trustworthy. As a result of betrayal, they have learned to stand at a distance, contained within impenetrable walls in which no one is allowed. In this state, true intimacy is virtually impossible. But this is not the answer. Though not entrusting himself to another, the individual is still in a state of thinking that man should be the one to come through for him. Despair, bitterness, or unfulfilled longing often result.

David learned much from his disappointments. He learned not to place his confidence and trust in man or even in himself.

Even when he felt disappointment in God, he realized that the cause of disappointment belonged to Uzzah. All too often God is blamed when in reality the blame should be aimed at man’s misrepresentation of Him. While men would fail him, David became convinced that God never would. Even at God’s declaration that he could not be the one to build the temple, he chose not to feel slighted or rejected. He gratefully submitted to divine direction. This is what he wrote:

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man” (Psalms 118:8, NKJV). “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me . . . I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living” (Psalms 142:3-5).

- The second part of the formula for dealing with disappointment is to take all that desire to place implicit trust in a person and rest it in God. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5, NIV).

“The fear of man brings a snare; but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25, NKJV).

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him” (Proverbs 30:5, NKJV).

“How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psalms 36:7).

To instill distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power is a central theme of the Bible. Among its pages we learn that no one ever trusted God in vain. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12).

III • The third part of the formula is to love all men. This step is crucial in preventing cynicism and detachment on the one hand and becoming emotionally weak and victimized on the other. Loving all men does not mean that all are close buddies or that we feel warm towards them. It is unessential to have some level of connection. David had to flee from Saul, but he remained loyal to him. Neither is it associated with affirmative words or praise. Praise and affirmation can produce such elevated feelings that we come to depend on them. They can become our drug of choice. Praise gives us the illusion that we are experiencing love. When we get a hit, we fly high. But when we don’t, it’s a bad day. The definition of love for all men is found in the bestowal of favor. It calls to humility and self-sacrifice. It includes speaking the truth in love even when it hurts. It is doing good to the other and being true to them. “Let us not love with words or tongue; but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18, NIV).

“Love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34, NJKV).

Scripture elaborates that the “one another” includes your neighbor, your enemy, those who love you, and those who don’t. It is a one-way action that has nothing to do with the receiver’s response. It is a reflection of goodwill toward them. Simply loving those who we receive positive stimuli from sets us up for disappointment. Ultimately our selfish motives will clash with theirs.

Disappointment is easy to come by, care for and keep alive. Simply trust your heart with a person and then when they disappoint you, give the disappointment daily attention and it will grow big and strong. If the heart is hurt deep enough then we erect tough, self-protective shields. Our emotional nature responds with anger, insecurity, or detachment.

Following this biblical formula not only works, it will make you grow, allowing for the achievement of greater intimacy and closer relationships. Even in the face of disappointment you will experience a greater level of inner peace.

Naturally, we do the formula in reverse. Trusting quickly and loving slowly is a sign of our immaturity. We often learn too late how foolish it can be to open our hearts to favor from everywhere, heedlessly trusting others. The more people we trust, the weaker we become. Whereas the more people we love, the stronger we become. With maturity, the more instantaneous will be the love and the slower the trust. Trust must be earned. And if it is broken, then repentance must be accompanied with proof of transformation before trust can be invested again.

The life of Jesus is a perfect illustration of how this formula works. Of the small group whom he chose to closely walk with, only three shared his most vulnerable experiences and struggles. Jesus had no unrealistic expectations of his disciples. He mingled confidence in their futures with awareness that they would betray His trust. All forsook Him when He needed them the most. But because ultimately His confidence was wholly placed in God, it did not destroy His relationship with His disciples. While it hurt, it did not rock His world. Jesus lived in dependence on the Father. There His emotional nature received sustenance.

Jesus loved the masses of people. In His life and in His death, Jesus was out of control in the bestowal of favor. Yet He knew that while today they followed Him, tomorrow they would cry, “Crucify Him.” The Bible says, “Jesus did not commit (entrust) Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25).

To the disciples assertion that they were whole-hearted believers Jesus responded, “Do you now believe? Indeed, the hour has now come that you will be scattered each to his own and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me” (John 16:31-32, NKJV). It is in the Father that I trust. I have committed Myself to Him.

What was the result of this kind of relationship? These very men grew up and, in devotion to Jesus, became faithful to the trust of sharing the good news with the world.

Closer relationships will occur and greater intimacy experienced when we follow this formula. It is true that we cannot have close relationships without some level of trust, but fellow erring human beings will not be the stronghold for our personal expectations or emotional strength. They will be trusted in proportion to their heart surrender to God. The apostle Paul wrote, “I have confidence in you through the Lord. . . .” (Galatians 5:10). “When men cease to depend upon men, when they make God their efficiency, then there will be more confidence manifested one in another. Our faith in God is altogether too feeble and our confidence in one another altogether too meager.”¹ Why is it too meager? The answer is we reverse the formula. We expect much from others, are stingy in the bestowal of favor, and doubt God. And this gets us into all kinds of emotional trouble.

When our hearts have found their fortress in God we will experience an inner tranquility through disappointments and quietness in the midst of turbulence. No longer will we feel the need to stand ever ready to defend ourselves. To those who give their disappointments to God, His overruling, grand, victorious purpose will bring about divine harmony.

Remember, “He that trusts in his own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26, NKJV). Trial means defeat to the person who trusts in himself. The buck doesn’t have to stop with you. You do not have to bear everything on your shoulders. There is Another whom you can turn to and lean wholly upon. You may say, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed (entrusted) to Him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12, NKJV). He will never let you down.

1. White, Ellen G. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, p. 264.

In Pursuit of Intimacy



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