

FREEDOM: Smashing the Devil's Most Insidious Weapon

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What do you do when your pain feels more overwhelming than your faith? What do you do when what you prayed for doesn't just go unanswered but the unthinkable happens? What happens when you see others receive God's breakthrough and you are left with disappointment?

In our disappointments lie the choice to either fall away or continue to follow Jesus when we are met with great letdowns. I have heard these phrases over the years: "If God was good, then..." or "If God was real, then..." We have attached His goodness and, even worse, His existence to our senses of fulfillment. This means that our disappointments become indicators that He must not be real. We have sometimes linked our happiness and everything working out for us to God's nature. Conversely, we have attributed our pain to His actions. We have even associated our struggles with fellow believers as being the Father's fault.

Danger Hiding In Plain Sight

Disappointment is by far an underestimated tool in the devil's hand. He uses it as a blinding light to point us away from God. Disappointment, meant to lead us into conversations with God, is a wedge that works its way into the middle of our relationship with God. In our disappointments we often turn to friends, podcasts, or therapists to try to make sense of things that only God can bring peace to.

Situations like deaths and sicknesses become our ammunition either to fall away from or to follow more fervently after Jesus. These events, if not seen through the lens of faith and endurance, will create a view of God as destructive as leaving the faith. Your faith is a home in which you will rest securely knowing your redemption, but its foundation is your views and beliefs. This is why we are to worship the God who made us in His image, not the God we made in ours.

“Fall or follow” is a phrase that came up in a discussion I had about handling disappointments as a Christian. I have witnessed many believers whose faith was shipwrecked because they didn’t know how to process disappointment. The Bible says that nothing can separate us from the love of God, but it never says we can’t willfully walk away from Him (Rom. 8:38–39). I believe more people walk away because of disappointment than we realize. If anybody knew of mistreatment from religious leaders, it was our Savior, Jesus. Sadly, many have chosen not to follow Him anymore because of their own brokenness and the brokenness of others. We are now at a pivotal time when we will either fall or follow.

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Our default reactions when we face disappointments or letdowns—or when we think we heard God but our experiences don’t align with what we heard—are often to ignore what happened or to throw a lot of Christian jargon at the situation instead of really facing the realities of what we went through. I am primarily referring to those whose disappointment results from the sensation that God has let them down based on the promises found in His Word. Here are some examples of the types of disappointment I am *not* referring to:

You prayed for God to have you marry an actor, and it didn’t happen.

You asked God to prove Himself by telling Him to knock down a picture from the wall, and that didn't happen.

You asked God to give you a new pair of shoes for your birthday, and that didn't happen.

Yes, these situations can cause us to feel disappointed at the moment, but they don't necessarily lead to a state of deep disappointment within us. These examples don't fall within the context of God's will and promises as described in His Word.

Life has a way of throwing curveballs that we never expected. Allow me to share what some of these curveballs can look like. Better yet, I'll list a few situations that you may be able to relate to that are genuinely disappointing situations we face as believers:

Someone you love gets sick. You pray for them, and they are not healed.

Someone you love was terminally ill; you felt as if God said He was going to heal them, but they ended up passing away.

You felt as if the Lord was going to restore a relationship or friendship, but it turned south, and you haven't spoken to the person since.

You felt that God was going to turn around a situation you were in, but instead you had to walk through it.

You felt as if God was going to take away all your depression and suicidal thoughts at the prayer meeting, but you left still battling them.

You feel as though you should have been free from that addiction you were in, but years later you find yourself still repenting.

We can get really technical here and delve into all the reasons that we think someone didn't get free—I've heard a lot

of them. They didn't pray enough, they didn't fast enough, they didn't read their Bible enough, they weren't serious about their faith, they left open doors to things in the spirit, they didn't break off generational curses from ten generations ago, or they're not tithing or giving. Whatever reason we give, the outcome is the same: The person who is going through whatever they are facing is left with disappointment.

So what do we do when faced with disappointing situations? What do we do when what we thought we believed takes a turn for the worst? How do we navigate deep sorrow and anger in these moments, and how do we start believing in God again when we feel He didn't come through the last time?

The danger of disappointment, if not dealt with, is that it leads believers to unbelief. Enough disappointment over a period of time, if not taken captive and nourished with the Word of God, can lead even the strongest Christians to unbelief. After all, I don't know any other Christians who actually physically walked with Jesus other than the apostles, yet even they found themselves in this place.

Facing Disappointing Situations

Our pain can drive out our faith faster than we grow in it. Have you ever seen someone who followed God—who loved God and even preached and did mighty works in His name—fall away faster than you could have imagined? Deep sorrow replaces the place in their heart that God once occupied; pain now takes that place. The place where they worshipped and thanked God, the place where they once gave Him glory, is now substituted with their heart, mind, and soul being fixed on the issue before them. Their thankfulness becomes grumbling. Instead of glory ascribed to His name, it becomes accusations like, "That's not what You said." And who God is to us is who He'll be through us. Our lives begin to preach our broken views of God, without words.

Inevitably, disappointment will always touch our emotions. It will create a million scenarios of what could have, should have, and would have been. Disappointment has a funny way of leading us back to Jesus if we let it. When it comes to people who have passed in our lives as Christians, we know this truth: We never truly die. Our bodies are mere space suits that house our spirits.

Navigating our emotions through it can feel as though we're in a tiny boat in a massive ocean during a storm. We quickly turn to survival mode, trying to protect and preserve ourselves from further pain. Self-preservation often becomes our shield and is an outcome of disappointment. We distance ourselves from areas of disappointment, from the people or groups we were disappointed by, and we even sometimes question or abandon a theology of God we once believed because of a situation or scenario.

I once heard that our emotions are incredible followers but terrible leaders. Disappointment will sometimes try to take the hand of Jesus from the steering wheels of our lives and hand them over to our emotions. In these seasons we must walk by faith and not by sight. (See 2 Corinthians 5:7.) The emotions we sometimes feel with disappointment can be:

nervousness to trust,

worry or anxiety,

regret that we ever trusted,

feeling excluded,

insecurity,

embarrassment for how we believed God,

terror to try to believe Him again,

hesitancy to move forward,

confusion,

anger, which can lead to hate and rage when undealt with,

hostility toward the Word of God or people wanting to speak truth, and

feeling trapped between what we know is true and what we just experienced.

All these feelings are very normal for a human being. Nowhere have I read that Jesus is scared of our emotions. But He does desire to walk us through them. If our emotions were created, then we were never meant to follow them; we are meant to follow the Creator.

Believing God Again

Believing God again can be hard if the concrete of disappointment has settled, and sometimes the only way to lay a new foundation is to completely break apart the old. While that process may be painful, it might be the only option. Believing God again often means facing the realities of our disappointments, embracing them, and embarking on the journey to trust God again. It means accepting that being made new sometimes requires dying to and removing what is old.

There might be many things you've gone through that have created disappointment, but it's important that as you continue to follow Jesus, you let Him drown those disappointments just as He did the Egyptians. Laying down our lives daily and picking up our crosses also means laying down yesterday's disappointments. There comes a point when we want to believe God again—believe His promises, His goodness, and that He works for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). We want to know that although He didn't cause the issue or the problem, He can surely see us through it.

I've seen disappointment take out so many believers or keep

them just attending weekly services but not really living out all that God has for them. I know there is a wave of grace and mercy coming to the body of Christ to lead us out of things we've been enslaved to.

I even feel right now that some of those reading this have disappointments and struggles with sin that have lingered since childhood. There may be disappointment that God can set other people free but not you. But just as Moses came representing the Lord, proclaiming deliverance to the Israelites who thought slavery would be their fate forever, I proclaim to you that deliverance is coming from your disappointments. You will find freedom, and although you might have spent years wandering, there is a promised land that God wants you to walk into.

Brian Barcelona is the founder of One Voice Student Missions and The Jesus Clubs. Since 2009, Brian has been a leader on the forefront of youth evangelism and is calling the high school students of America to surrender their lives to Jesus and calling the church to our nation's most unreached mission field: public high schools. Since 2020, The Jesus Clubs has grown to be a youth movement in the digital space, where millions have heard the gospel and thousands have come to know Jesus. Brian lives with his family and community in Texas. His newest book, *Legends Die Young*, is available at now.