

2 Strategies to Dissipate the Dark Cloud of Disappointment

Disappointment is something we all experience in life, and many times throughout our life.

How we deal with disappointment when it comes determines whether or not it becomes a stepping stone to greater maturity or the thing that becomes our future and our identity.

I was never known as a power hitter when playing softball.

That is what made the back-to-back home runs extremely surprising. I was a good place-hitter and had a good eye at the plate, so I would very rarely strike out.

But a power-hitter I was not!

We were playing a particularly tough team and not exactly expected to win the game. My first turn at bat in the game was a well-placed low line drive between first and second base mid-deep in right field—a very nice single that drove in a run.

My second turn at bat was a surprising rocket over second base, out of the park, that drove in runners from second base and third base.

When our team batted around that inning, it gave us a big lead. My third turn at bat came at the beginning of the next inning, I was the lead-off batter. The third pitch, I again hit a rocket over second base out of the park, a solo home run.

Crazy excited, I ran down the first base line like I had been shot out of-a cannon. When I rounded first and head for second I stumbled and rolled head over heels into second base. I quickly got up and ran toward third, only to stumble again.

Unable to walk or run, I literally pulled myself into third base. Something was wrong in my right leg.

I was unable to complete running out the home run. Coach sent a pinch-runner in for me on third base, while they carried me off the field. My second home was officially recorded as a triple!

What a great disappointment—or should I say what a painful disappointment! I spent six weeks recovering from a torn muscle that was surgically repaired. That was the last home run I would ever hit. Eight years later, however, at 40 years of age, I would bat a thousand for the season, not recording my first out until the final game of the playoffs when I hit a fly ball to center field.

Our coach had fun teasing me because I had hit so well during the season and for the first three games of the championship. He mockingly said, “Did him’s make an out? Awe, so sad!”

Disappointments and regret can be a tool of the enemy to keep you anchored and unable to soar spiritually. Physical pain is difficult to deal with at best and can become a mighty weapon in the hand of the enemy, weakening faith and holding you captive.

Certainly, this story is of a minor disappointment and a small amount physical pain compared to the pain and disappointment someone suffers when they experience a marriage partner’s unfaithfulness; a severe car wreck; the loss of a business; or the diagnosis of a life-threatening disease.

The reality of human life is that disappointment and physical pain come to everyone and they come in all sizes and in all measures of severity.

Jesus said, “It is impossible that no offenses come” (Luke 17:1).

Living in a sinful, fallen world—populated by human beings with a sin nature that can be animated by Lucifer and his demonic hosts—makes it impossible to live free from disappointment and pain. The frailty and imperfect nature of our own being assures disappointments will come, accidents will happen and sickness and disease will be experienced.

That is the human experience.

The real issue is not the reality of disappointments and pain but how to successfully handle them.

How can you live free from the shackles of regret, the dark cloud of disappointment and the prison of pain?

1. Deal with the question: Why?

The apostle Peter gave us the first important clue to handle them well. He wrote, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12 MEV).

You do not handle pain well or conquer regret and disappointment when the feelings of betrayal or abandonment are dogging your emotion: *Why did God do this to me? Why didn't God stop this? Why did God not answer my prayer?* It is not easy to accept the fact bad things happen to good people. It is not strange. It is the reality of living in a fallen world.

God has not failed you in some way. God has not abandoned you. Those are lies from the enemy and must be replaced in your mind and emotions with the assurance of God's love; God's care for you; and the firm promises, “*I will never leave you or forsake you*” (Heb 13:5), and “*No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will*

with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13 MEV).

It is critical to your well-being that you firmly deal with the question, "Why?" Do not allow it to linger in your mind and to be spoken from your lips. Replace it with a bold declaration of God's presence, His love and His affirmation. He has your best at His heart. He will make good come of this somehow. You probably cannot see any way good can come from it right now. He already knows. He is faithful. You can trust Him. He will bring good into your life, even out of this.

2. Choose not to allow disappointment to define you.

The second step in dealing victoriously with disappointment and pain requires building strong spiritual muscles and good skills in disciplining your thought life and managing your emotions. You must choose to not allow pain and disappointment to define your life.

My son and I were returning home from the store with a quart of eggnog. It was Christmas Eve, 1992. According to our family tradition, our first eggnog was enjoyed the afternoon or evening of Christmas Eve. Don't know why—it was just a fun tradition established early in our marriage.

Half a block from home, a drunk driver ran a stop sign and hit a car broad-side. That car, speeding at forty-five miles an hour in a residential neighborhood, hit our car head on. The severe injuries suffered in that accident filled my body with pain 24 hours a day. Six months later, my life was being defined by pain. I had "bad pain days" and "not-so-bad days." Depression was creeping under the doors of my life and impacting my days. It was affecting my attitude and my work.

I had to make a choice. Would I allow my physical pain and the pain in my body to determine my identity and my future and to dictate my behavior? Or would I allow Holy Spirit who dwells within me to rule my thoughts and my emotions and to dictate

my behavior?

It is a choice we all have to make on a regular basis, when dealing with temptation and daily circumstances. In the case of disappointment and physical pain, it is more challenging and much more difficult because it is part of us and so constant. It is a choice we must make, nonetheless.

Jesus Christ lives in us. Holy Spirit empowers us. Ephesians 3:17-21 gives the assurance we need to make such a difficult choice.

1. We can be strengthened with supernatural might by Holy Spirit in the inner-man.
2. Jesus Christ dwells in us and anchors our life in the love of God. His care for us and firm resolve for our best is always at the center of His heart.
3. Our life is filled with all the fullness of God, no matter what we suffer physically or emotionally.
4. He will do exceedingly above all we could ask or even think.

Therefore, I can choose joy over pain. I can choose to walk past disappointment into a future filled with hope and assurance.

Holy Spirit fills my life with the supernatural power of almighty God. My pain and my disappointment do not weaken or diminish the scope of His power in me. My faith and my choice are the only factors regulating the measure of His power and influence in my life.

When the truth of these verses filled my mind and my heart, I embraced the reality of Holy Spirit influence in my life. I chose love, joy and peace over my pain-filled days.

It was not easy. It was "painfully" difficult at first, and would only last for about an hour or two. But, as I built

those spiritual muscles and discovered how very personal and real Holy Spirit is in my life, He gained greater and greater influence over my mind and my emotions.

It did not lessen the pain or change the reality of how that accident on Christmas Eve impacted my life and my family.

But it has transformed my days.

Depression no longer clouds my mind. Pain no longer dictates the quality of my life. Love, joy and peace from Holy Spirit fill my emotions, control my thinking and rule my tongue.

Oh, I still have to make the choice on a daily basis. It is not a one-time choice for a lifetime.

While it is initiated with a single choice to no longer allow disappointment and pain to rule your life, it must be a choice you make daily. Sometimes it is an hour-by-hour choice to live by Holy Spirit influence over your thoughts and over your emotions, so that physical pain or past memory are not in control.

The reality of the apostle Peter's exhortation has deepened in my life over the years. I don't know if one can fully grasp the measure of truth revealed in his words until we have allowed Holy Spirit to walk us through deep disappointment and severe pain. I pray the depth of his words become very real for you, as well.

"But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's sufferings, so that you may rejoice and be glad also in the revelation of His glory" (1 Pet. 4:13 MEV).

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