

4 Do's and Don'ts to Defeat the Dangers of Disappointment

Disappointment. It's the feeling of sadness caused by unmet hopes or expectations. And who hasn't experienced its grief?

Every day, we all face letdowns and setbacks in a variety of degrees. Some are seemingly small. Perhaps a loved one had to cancel dinner at the last minute. Or your team didn't win the game they were favored to dominate. Others are much more heartbreaking, such as the loss of a promising opportunity, job or love.

The danger in disappointment is that, if not correctly handled, it can quickly shift from feeling betrayed or misled by people or circumstances to feeling deceived by God. The voice in your head goes something like this: "It seemed so clear that God intended for this to happen, I just can't understand why it failed. Why would God bring me this far only to snatch it away from me?"

If entertained for too long, thoughts like these lead to deep depression and hopelessness. After all, if you can't count on God, then who can you count on?

So what do you do when life doesn't go your way? How do you avoid the pitfalls of disappointment? From working through my own letdowns, I've found the following do's and don'ts to be very helpful:

DON'T wallow in bitter grief.

When something disappoints you, the temptation is to sulk in sadness. As you'll see in the next point, grieving is important and necessary for a time, but if it persists, it can be debilitating to your health and relationships.

In the Old Testament, God allowed specific periods for mourning between seven to 30 days. It seems the duration was set according to the significance of the loss. For example, the mourning period for the death of Moses and Aaron was 30 days, while it was only seven for Jacob (Gen. 50:10; Deut. 34:8; Num. 20:29).

To be sure, God's grief guidelines here aren't because He's heartless or insensitive. God isn't a blunt counselor whose only prescription is to "suck it up and get tough." But rather, God simply doesn't want you to become a slave to anything—especially sadness.

DO shed necessary tears.

Just as excessive grief is destructive, so is pent-up grief. Certainly, you shouldn't hold back your tears in order to pretend that everything is OK. That will only cause issues down the road. As you just saw, there is a time for mourning. And that's what Ecclesiastes affirms, too. *"To everything there is a season... a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance"* (Eccl. 3:1, 4, MEV).

Grieving is a natural response to pain and disappointment. And the Bible indicates that it can even help to refresh your perspective on life (Eccl. 7:2). If a disappointment pains you, it's OK to admit that it hurts. Confess it to a friend and to God. Then let some tears flow. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35). Going through this process is often a necessary step on the way to the joy that God wants for you (Ps. 30:5).

DON'T point fingers.

Naturally, we seek to find the source of our problems so that we can get to the solutions. And a danger with disappointment is that we often see that the problem is someone else, or as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, that it's God.

For example, if you get passed over for a promotion, you might

begin to find issue with the one who got it or the boss who didn't select you. If your spouse gets called in to work, which interrupts your plans, you might begin to murmur that he or she doesn't care about you. Or if an opportunity doesn't come to pass, you might even pin it on God keeping it from you.

When you start to point fingers for the things that go wrong, a bitter undercurrent grows in you, which destroys relationships and keeps you from joy. So rather than play the blame game, move on to the final point below.

DO begin to trust again.

Though this might sound cliché, it's true nonetheless: for your own happiness and sanity, it's crucial that you cast your cares on the Lord (Ps. 55:22). Truthfully, you're here reading this having made it through many circumstances you never thought you'd make it through: relationship issues, sicknesses, financial burdens, tests or the loss of loved ones—things you thought would kill you! Yet here you are.

To get to the other side of disappointment and experience the joy that God desires for you, you can't wallow in bitter grief or rant and rave in unending disbelief. But rather, admit that it isn't what you hoped, shed the necessary tears and then get back up with trust that the same God who got you through yesterday's struggles and let downs will get you through today's and tomorrow's too. {eoa}

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