

4 Spirit-Powered Steps to Help You Deal With Your Deep Disappointment

Disappointment. It's a big thing in life and in our Christian walk—but it doesn't have to be.

We all face disappointments from different things, but how can we learn to overcome them and keep our hearts set on the Lord?

Whatever the source of the disappointment—God, ourselves or others—we must learn to face it and find healing in Him. (The Lord is perfect, but in our frustration, we can think wrongly of Him and need to repent for thinking of Him incorrectly).

These simple steps can help us face the hurt, work through our feelings and keep pursuing Jesus, our Savior and the lover of our souls.

1. Acknowledge the Pain

Disappointment hurts; don't hide or pretend otherwise. It's better to admit that you're disappointed and confront the pain, otherwise it will fester.

Be honest with God and with others. In this season, we need help from our friends, spiritual mentors and God Himself, so let them hear your cry. You'll feel better releasing the emotions, and the Lord is present "to heal the brokenhearted" (Luke 4:18). Admitting the pain and releasing it is a key first step.

2. Confess Any Unrealistic Expectations

Most disappointment stems from unrealistic expectations of ourselves, others and of God. We planned for something, and it didn't happen. We prayed, and God didn't answer like we thought. We set a goal but didn't meet it. Or someone broke

their word or promise to us.

The reality is, we live in a fallen world, and we ourselves are also imperfect. Even as believers, we see in part and know in part (1 Cor. 13:12). This means, for instance, that a prophetic word we cling to may still be true, but how and when it takes place is still ultimately up to God, not our interpretation of it.

Even people who didn't mean to disappoint us, like a parent, pastor or spouse, sometimes do. Maybe they didn't know they were doing it, but sin is part of the human condition. No person, not even ourselves, can meet all of our expectations all the time.

Recognizing this truth and confessing our unrealistic expectations will help us get free.

And remember, when wrongs happen, it's easy to blame others and think we're right. But we'll find freedom by examining our own heart motives and expectations instead of simply blaming others. Even when people sin against us deliberately, we still face the choice to forgive—which brings us to our next step.

3. Forgive Others—and Yourself

Forgiveness sets us free. It's liberating.

Jesus told a story (parable) in Matthew 18 about this. In it, He likens us to a servant who owed a king a debt he couldn't pay (worth many millions of dollars). In mercy the king forgives the debt, but the servant immediately finds another servant who owed him a much smaller amount and demands payment. When that man couldn't pay, the servant had him thrown in jail.

Then his master, after he had summoned him, said to him, 'O you wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you?' His master

was angry and delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt (Matt. 18:32-34).

That torture would have lasted the rest of that man's life, and probably beyond, because of the size of the debt—a stern warning about the eternal consequences of unforgiveness.

Jesus ends the parable by saying, “So also My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, if from your heart you do not forgive your brother for his trespasses” (Matt. 18:35). How sobering!

So what is the message? If you are following Jesus and have received forgiveness of your sins, forgiving others is not an option. You may be hurt and disappointed, but you must learn to forgive others from your heart.

Helpful tips on Forgiveness:

- It's a choice, and often a process. We can start by choosing to forgive because we've been forgiven and ask God's grace to do so fully and completely. It can also take time for the memory or hurt to fully fade.
- Sometimes forgiving ourselves is the hardest thing of all. We can't get over what we did (or didn't do) and can't let go of how we “should have” acted. If that's you, please talk to a pastor or trusted friend. They can help you examine any unrealistic expectations you may have of yourself (such as perfectionism or burdens from a familiar spirit), as this is often the root source of the disappointment.
- Don't be your own worst critic or enemy (even if this feels normal), partnering with the devil who accuses us night and day before God (Rev. 12:10), but rather seek Jesus, who intercedes for us in grace before the throne (Heb. 7:25).

4. Return to Your First Love

Like the servant in the Matthew 18 parable, we can't work off our debt. Yet, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Since we are saved by grace through faith, "not of works, so that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9), we must return "Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5). Salvation starts and finishes with God; He is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

The Lord is not simply looking for more good works as a futile attempt to 'pay off' our debt, but has promised to accept "a broken and a contrite heart" (Ps. 51:17). A heart that is renewed and washed in His gracious love will naturally overflow into good works.

God's mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). Sorrow may last for a night (or a day or a month), but the Lord has promised us joy. Instead of staying in disappointment, come to Jesus, who promises to receive us with open arms (John 6:37).

Are you struggling with disappointment? What steps can you take to heal? {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .