

Understanding our Negative Emotions

Disappointment

With Bishop Ronald K. Powell

Disappointment is *an emotional response to some failed expectation or desire*. When people let us down, circumstances turn bleak, or adversity comes, we usually feel disappointed—and understandably so. However, if we don't deal properly with this emotion, it can lead to bitterness, discouragement, and depression.

How can you properly respond to disappointment?

1. **Realize that God is aware of your circumstances.** Nothing catches Him off guard. Therefore, let your first reaction be to turn in His direction. Pour out your heart to the Lord, and ask Him to guide you through the time of disappointment.
 - How do you usually cope with this emotion?
 - Summarize how the psalmist responded to disappointment (Psalm 42:1-5).

Psalm 42:1–5 [English Standard Version](#)

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?²

3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I would go with the throng
and lead them in procession to the house of God
with glad shouts and songs of praise,
³a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation.

God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. We can rest in His presence because we know nothing happens to us that He has not allowed. If disappointment, sorrow, or trouble comes, He will show us how to respond and will lead us to a place of blessing and hope.

- How can the principle found in Philippians 1:6 encourage those who feel disappointed with themselves?
2. **Understand that disappointment is a part of life.** There is no escaping all heartache and pain. But instead of becoming angry and overwhelmed, you can allow God to work in your circumstances.

It's important to acknowledge your feelings but at the same time to stand firm in your faith. Has the Lord ever failed you? No. He may have allowed some things to turn out differently from the way you planned or desired. But in every moment of discouragement, He was right beside you, offering His strength, wisdom, and insight.

- What is one of God's purposes for allowing disappointment in our lives (James 4:8)?

The Book of James was not written to people living in comfort, ease, and pleasure. Most were part of what is known as the Dispersion. They were Jewish believers who had been forced by the Roman government to leave their homes and settle in foreign countries.

- What did James tell the believers they could expect from trials (James 1:2-4)?

Note: The Greek word translated as "perfect" in verse 4 means "mature," as in a fruit that has ripened. The verse speaks of spiritual maturity rather than moral perfection.

- Why do you think suffering produces such results in our lives (James 1:4)?
3. **Be hopeful, because hope is contagious.** Remember that God has never failed to keep a promise. He offers us hope in even the darkest situation. When we learn to encourage others who are hurting, we are doing what He has done for us.
- Name a few character qualities that tribulation develops in believers (James 5:3-5).

Hope is contagious, but so is disappointment. Our discouragement, cynicism, and anger can affect friends, family members, and coworkers. That's why we must be careful to respond quickly and correctly when we are disappointed.

- When we are tempted to give into discouragement, what promise do we have from God
 - (1 Cor. 10:13)? Describe what this might look like in your life.

 - Think of a discouraging situation you've faced. If you had faced the experience with a positive attitude, what types of people would have been blessed?
4. **Recognize that disappointment can be conquered.**
- God can use disappointment to discipline us. What does Hebrews 12:11 say is the ultimate result of His chastisement?

Paul had plenty of opportunities to become discouraged—he was beaten, stoned, lashed with a whip, imprisoned, persecuted, and shipwrecked (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

- What did he learn was the secret to overcoming the hardships he experienced (2 Cor. 12:9-10)?

Disappointment trains—or disciplines—us to trust God with an undivided mind and heart. However, we must stand strong in our faith and not fall victim to doubt or self-pity.

Notice how King David encouraged himself in Psalm 42:11:

Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And why have you become disturbed within me?

Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,

The help of my countenance and my God.

You, too, can overcome discouragement through praise. Sing a hymn or worship song, read aloud from the book of Psalms, or simply honor God from your heart.

- Describe your favorite way(s) to praise the Lord. Why do you think worshiping Him changes our attitudes?

Closing: In difficult times, do you automatically think, *Life is so bad. I can never get ahead?* Or do you ask the Father to give you His perspective? An open heart to God is a foundational step in gaining strength and freedom during deep disappointments.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, show me what You want me to learn through the difficulties I face. Enable me to turn to You and honestly share how I feel. Help me hear Your voice guiding me through disappointment to self-discipline, supernatural peace, and hope. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.