

Navigating Disappointment in Life and Ministry

Introduction

Throughout human history, people have experienced emotions they were often never taught how to navigate, emotions like lust, anger, bitterness, and disappointment. Today, I want to focus on disappointment. Why do people feel disappointed, and how do we remain hopeful in the midst of an uncertain world?

- A friend doesn't reach out.
- You don't get the promotion.
- Financial goals take longer than expected.
- You don't see the results you hoped for from diet or exercise.
- Parents don't give the support you hoped for.
- The ministry grows more slowly than expected.
- Prayers seem unanswered.

Learn to Distinguish Between God's Promises and Your Desires

Discouragement and disappointment usually come from the gap between human desire and current reality.

When we treat our desires as promises from God, disappointment becomes crushing.

The problem is not having expectations or desires for our lives. The problem is having certainty about things God never promised us.

Examples of desires, not promises:

- That everyone will like you.
- That every relationship will be restored.
- That every prayer for healing will be answered immediately.
- That faithful ministry will always produce immediate, visible fruit.

The problem is not desiring good things. The problem is placing our ultimate hope in outcomes God never guaranteed.

Anchor Your Hope in What God Has Actually Promised

In Scripture, God has given us promises we can build our hope on.

God's Presence

- Jesus will always be with you. (Matthew 28:20)

God's Salvation

- Whoever believes in Christ has eternal life. (John 3:16)

God's Grace

- God's grace is sufficient for you. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

God's Strength

- God will strengthen you when you are weak. (Isaiah 40:29-31)

God's Peace

- God will give you peace as you trust Him and pray. (Philippians 4:6-7)

God's Wisdom

- God gives wisdom generously to those who ask. (James 1:5)

God's Provision

- God will provide everything you truly need. (Philippians 4:19)

God's Faithfulness

- God is always faithful to His promises. (2 Timothy 2:13)

God's Work in You

- God will complete the work He began in you. (Philippians 1:6)

God's Work Through You

- Your labor in the Lord is never in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

God's Sovereignty

- God works all things together for the good of those who love Him. (Romans 8:28)

God's Justice

- God will one day make all things right. (Revelation 21:3-5)

God's Future

- Christ will return and make all things new. (Revelation 21:1-5)

The Life and Example of the Apostle Paul

Paul desired:

- To preach in Rome.
- That Israel would believe the gospel.
- That churches would remain united.
- That coworkers would stay faithful.
- That his “thorn in the flesh” would be removed.

Some of those desires were delayed, partially fulfilled, or never fulfilled in the way Paul wanted.

Yet Paul's hope rested in promises like:

- Christ's grace is sufficient.
- Nothing can separate us from God's love.
- God works all things together for good.
- Our labor in the Lord is not in vain.
- God is faithful.
- God's Word is not chained, even when Paul was in chains in prison.

Paul did not lower his desires; he elevated his hope in God's promises.

Application

1. Pray honestly and consistently about your desires.
2. Place your hope in one or two promises from God for this season of your life.
3. Be clear about what God has not promised, so you do not build your hope on uncertainty.