

## Spiraling Up When Disappointment Tries to Knock You Down

Hey, thanks for joining us this morning.

I was interested to read that a common question asked at job interviews is “what was your biggest disappointment?” Knowing how you handle disappointment gives them a window into what you do when you get knocked down.

Disappointment has a unique ability to knock us down because of its relationship to hope. Disappointment is to hope what crashing is to an airplane. The higher the hope, the more devastating it is when that hope is disappointed.

If you're one of a thousand applying for an “I can take it or leave it” job, and you don't get it, you might be a little disappointed but you'll probably get over it pretty quickly. But if you apply for your dream job, and they tell you they've narrowed it down to one of two applicants and you're one of the two...see what happens? Your hopes go sky high. So when the phone rings and they tell you they chose the other person, that can really knock the wind out of a guy.

If enough expectations crash, and enough hopes are dashed, disappointment can go from something that happens to us, to something we are. We can begin to think of ourselves as disappointments. We can become disappointed with how our lives turned out.

So, yeah, it's a good question: *what was your biggest disappointment?*

But maybe there's another question that's even more important to ask: *what's God doing in this disappointment?*

I think that's a question Joseph had to ask himself many times, cause his life was a roller coaster of disappointments. Let's pick up the story where we left off last week in Gen. 39:21

***<sup>21</sup> But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. <sup>22</sup> And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. <sup>23</sup> The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed. Gen. 39:21***

Can you imagine Joseph's job interview with the prison keeper: Joseph, what was your biggest disappointment? Joseph would have a hard time picking one: Let's see, there's that time my brothers decided to kill me, but then sold me into slavery instead. That was disappointing. Then there was the time I was elevated to be in charge of Potiphar's household, until his wife falsely accused me of assault and I was thrown in prison. That's how I came to apply for this job.

He doesn't know it, but I think Joseph's biggest disappointment is yet to come.

You probably remember what happens next: the Pharaoh's cupbearer and his baker are thrown in prison and they both have dreams. Joseph interprets the dreams – good news for the cupbearer, he'll be back in Pharaoh's service in three days. That raises the hopes of the baker. Joseph says, in three days Pharaoh will also raise your head – right off your shoulders! He'll be hung and his flesh eaten by birds. Talk about disappointing!

Sure enough, three days later the cupbearer is sprung, and the baker is hung. But before the cupbearer returns to serve the Pharaoh, Joseph gives him a message: tell Pharaoh about me. I don't belong here,

I've done nothing wrong, please let me out. Look at 40:23

**23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. Gen. 40:23**

At first Joseph's hopes must have been sky high – this was how God was going to deliver him. He probably started packing every time he heard footsteps in the prison hall. How long was it before he realized the cupbearer forgot him? Days? Weeks? Months? Years? He would be forgotten in that prison for another two long years.

Joseph, what was your biggest disappointment? I think this must be it.

But I love the way Joseph deals with these crushing disappointments. As we look at life lessons from Joseph's story, let's consider:

### **Three lessons we can learn through disappointment (what God is doing in our disappointment)**

#### **1. Disappointment can be just the resistance our faith needs to take off**

Did you know that planes can't take off if the temperature gets too hot? The reason is the air molecules expand and spread out, the air becomes less dense, too thin for the plane to get the lift it needs. The air becoming less dense might seem like it would make it easier to fly, but the plane needs the pushback of the denser air to get lift.

For our faith to take off, we need resistance.

What do you think would happen to your faith if every prayer you prayed was answered immediately just the way you prayed it? Every prayer for provision – answered! Every prayer for a bad situation to get better – answered! Every prayer for someone to get saved – bang, they're at the altar giving their lives to Jesus. Every prayer for healing quickly answered. What do you think would happen to your faith?

You might think, man, if that happened, my faith would take off! I'd be praying and believing and trusting a whole lot more than I am right now if that ever happened! My faith would take off!

But I'm not so sure that's the case. It's like the kid who grows up getting everything they ask for, and then one day they don't get something they ask for and they have a complete meltdown because they haven't learned how to deal with denial. They don't know how to handle disappointment. Our faith might do ok as long as we got what we asked for, but the day our prayer wasn't answered immediately our faith might take a nosedive cause our faith doesn't have depth and strength. It takes resistance to develop strength.

You go into a gym, one guy's bench-pressing 200 lb weights, the other guy is bench pressing two pillows tied to a bar, no question the guy pressing pillows will have it easier. But our muscles need pushback, density, not-easy, if they are to develop strength. Same is true with our faith. It takes resistance for our faith to grow stronger. It takes resistance if our faith is going to take off.

You know how we know resistance didn't crash Joseph's faith? This whole chain of disappointing events started when he shared two dreams he had. When the cupbearer and baker said, we've dreamed dreams, I could see Joseph saying, thanks but no thanks. Been there, done that. I'm done with dreams.

Instead he says, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams!" If anything his faith has grown – he didn't interpret his two dreams, but he's ready to believe God to give him the interpretation of their dreams.

He's on the runway ready to take off with faith. The faith to share his two dreams gives him faith to go higher and interpret their two dreams, which then positions him a couple years later to interpret Pharaoh's two dreams. Resistance against his faith just makes his faith rise higher.

Disappointment can be just the resistance our faith needs to take off.

## **2. Disappointments can be divine appointments in disguise**

When we look at the disappointments in Joseph's life, we start to see that they were divine appointments in disguise. God gave Joseph dreams that promised "I have great plans for your life, Joseph!"

- But those plans weren't going to unfold with Joseph living happily at home, so God scheduled an appointment with disappointment and Joseph was sold into slavery.
- After a time Joseph was getting comfortable in his position in Potiphar's home, but God's long term plans didn't stop at Joseph leading Potiphar's household, so God set up an appointment with disappointment and Joseph was thrown into prison.
- Joseph probably assumed that God's plan for freeing him from prison would be through the cupbearer's restoration to his old position – and eventually it would be! – but God scheduled an appointment with disappointment that would leave Joseph in prison two more long years until Pharaoh had a dream that needed to be interpreted.

The point is, God used disappointments over and over again to direct Joseph's life to the right place at the right time and God will do that in our lives too. Disappointment is often divine appointment in disguise.

So when disappointments enter our life, we should be looking for God's divine appointment in that disappointment.

One of the mistakes we can make is to think of disappointment as the destination rather than part of the journey. Rather than just passing through disappointment on the journey of life, we buy a home on Disappointment Lane and label our lives a disappointment.

Or we accept that label from other people: "you've been nothing but a disappointment."

Or we give that label to someone: "you're such a disappointment to me."

No, no, no. For the Christian disappointment is sometimes a way station but it's never the destination. We should be looking for what God has planned next.

When God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window – and that window is what God wanted us to go through all the time. Let's see disappointments, in God's hands, as an opportunity to chart out a new course, a new direction. Disappointments can often be divine appointments in disguise.

## **3. Let's resolve to have a "nose up" attitude in the disappointment**

Since we're talking about airplanes, we all know that planes fly at a certain altitude, but they also fly with a certain "attitude" as well. A plane ascending has a "nose up" attitude and a plane descending has a "nose down" attitude.

If you've ever watched a plane as it's landing, you've probably noticed that as it's descending, its nose is kept slightly up. If the pilot didn't point the nose up a little as it landed, it would crash. Even when landing, the plane's nose needs to be pointed up slightly.

Joseph had a nose up attitude: however you want to describe it, he had an excellent spirit, he was buoyant, everything he did he did well, he was a hard worker. It's what got him noticed by his superiors. That doesn't mean that Joseph never had the wind knocked out of him by disappointment after disappointment. But somewhere along the way, he determined with God's help to keep a "nose up" attitude no matter what.

Of course I don't know what disappointment might look like in your life. And please don't think I'm downplaying or simplifying it. Disappointment can be, well, disappointing to the point of crushing our hope and spirit.

But let's resolve to keep a nose up attitude even when everything inside of us wants to point the nose down and say, "I give up. I quit. I'm going to become bitter. I'm gonna let myself become cynical. I'm gonna stop trying."

When you feel like that, do things that help point your attitude up: spend some time in God's promises, take long walks and pour your heart out to God, share your heart with a friend, get busy helping someone in need.

I know it's easier said than done, I get that. I'm a little nervous sharing this message cause I know if a major disappointment hits my life tomorrow, I'll be as tempted as anyone to have a nose down attitude. But let's resolve, with God's help, to keep a nose up attitude.

Listen, I firmly believe we can't do anything apart from God's help and grace. I believe what Jesus said, "apart from me you can do nothing." Christianity isn't us trying real hard, it's Jesus doing all the work of saving us and then giving us salvation as a gift.

So when I use the word "resolve" someone might think, aren't you putting it all on us? Aren't you kind of laying the heavy of "you need to do this for God" on us? Yes and no. I don't believe we can resolve apart from God's grace in us, but I also believe that faith enables us to have resolve about the attitude we're going to choose to have.

God is ready to help us point our attitude up and forgive us when our attitudes get pointed down.

"What was your biggest disappointment?" – it's a great question. But as Christians we don't want to stop there. The more important question to ask is, "what does God want to do in my life through this disappointment?"

- Disappointments can be the resistance our faith needs to take off
- Divine appointments in disguise
- Opportunity to resolve to keep a nose up attitude

And watch what God does!

Let's pray.