

PrayerCast: When You Struggle with Disappointment with Polly Danforth

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We all experience disappointment to some degree – sadness or unhappiness that results when our hopes or expectations are not fulfilled – characterized by feelings of loss, frustration, even anger. What life experiences cause you disappointment? Sometimes it is mild and fleeting -- like when your favorite team loses the championship; or a friend cancels your lunch date at the last minute; or your number of “likes” on social media is trending down.

But sometimes disappointment seems like a deep valley that is much more difficult to climb out of -- like when you are passed over for a promotion that you worked hard to get; or your teenager lashes out in rebellion and anger; or your ‘happily-ever-after’ isn’t.

Let’s take a moment to pray and allow the Holy Spirit to breathe some fresh air into those places in our hearts where disappointment threatens to steal all the oxygen.

PRAYER: Father God, God of all Grace and Love, help us now as we look to Your Word for light and peace. Draw our eyes up to see Your unfailing love and compassion for us, just as you lifted up David.

Turn in your Bible to Psalm 13. David expresses feeling forgotten, forsaken, and sorrowful. He cried out to God for answers and as he prayed his perspective gradually changed. At the end of this short chapter David was able to rejoice, even though his circumstances remained unchanged.

“1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?

3 Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes.”

As you think about David’s pleas, what situation comes to mind where you have recently felt really hurt and disappointed? PAUSE

How did you deal with your feelings of sadness, or frustration, or anger? PAUSE

Did you talk it over with Jesus? If not, bring it to Him now. PAUSE

It can be hard to pray when we’re upset. It’s hard to feel authentic and open with the Lord when our painful emotions are all balled up inside. We are good at erecting monuments to all our disappointments – all the mistakes and failures and hurt feelings – the Evil One loves to walk us down that corridor every day to review and remember, keeping our focus on ourselves instead of turning our face toward God.

And that is what is so compelling about Psalm 13. In verse 3 David cries out to the Lord: Don’t forget me! Look at me! Answer me! The wave of emotion that is crashing over him causes him to PRAY – and when David prayed, the consolation he discovered was amazing!

Look at the transition from verse 4 to 5. In verse 4 he reflected on the enemies which were causing his disappointment, but in verse 5 he turned the corner to a whole new perspective.

But wait, did David's circumstances change? Not that we know of. But notice his new focus:

5 "But I will trust in Your unfailing love, my heart rejoices in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me."

David had a lifetime of experience in seeing God show up time after time; being able to reflect on God's faithfulness gave David the confidence to turn it over and let it go.

Think about a time in your life when it seemed like nothing could go right, but in hindsight the Holy Spirit gave you a fresh perspective and comfort in the outcome.

We can trust our wise Father with the results even when it doesn't seem like things are going the way we want them to.

SO what are some lessons we can learn today about struggling through disappointment?

1. Always trust God to give us what will be best for us, even when it's not what we expected.
2. Ask God to provide a fresh perspective from His word to help us let go of unrealistic expectations we may be putting on ourselves or on others.
3. And when we have been mistreated or let down by others, we need to look for ways God may be using a difficult situation to draw us and others to Him.
4. Like David, rejoice in the God of our salvation, that He loves us unconditionally, that He is helping us grow in righteousness, that one day He will save us from all the pain and disappointment of this fallen world!

Join me in prayer: Holy Father, thank you for meeting us in the valley of our disappointment and reminding us that You have not forsaken or forgotten us. Please help us to not dwell on what might have been, but to trust that You know what is best for us in each situation. As we learn to extend grace and forgiveness to others -- and to ourselves -- come and meet with Your beloved children, so that we may be found praying, trusting, rejoicing, and singing, like David.

In the marvelous and merciful name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.