

sermon study guide

January 16/17 2021

Press On: Dealing with Disappointment

Ashwin Ramani

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. After a busy day, how do you like to unwind? Connect with friends/family? Curl up with a book or a favourite TV show? Other?
2. Consider disappointments you've experienced in life. Describe your pattern of dealing with them. How well would you say your approach is working?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 14:3-14, 23

3. Although Jesus was God, He also needed solitude and silence to process the pain of hurt and disappointment. How do you feel when you read about Jesus' response when he sees the crowds? How was he able to respond in the way that he did?
4. How do you know when to turn inward for healing versus looking outward to serve others? How might each of these bring healing? What might be the result of focusing on just one while neglecting the other?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Ashwin said, "Solitude is a forgotten spiritual discipline in our day and age." Why is solitude an important response to disappointment? How can you design an inner and outer space for solitude where you can be alone with God daily, or for an extended time? What might hinder you from this practice?
6. Our pain and disappointment can be 'recycled' and channeled for God's purposes. Describe how God used a disappointment in your life to bless others.

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 14:3-14, 23

3 Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, 4 for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." 5 Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

6 On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much 7 that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." 9 The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted 10 and had John beheaded in the prison. 11 His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. 12 John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Is the Lord leading you to respond to immediate needs around you? Or might the Lord be leading you to a time of solitude with Him? Ask the Lord to stir up compassion to serve others, and wisdom to schedule in times of solitude.

sermon study summary

Press On: Dealing with Disappointment

Ashwin Ramani

The Christian life involves perseverance against all kinds of opposition, while God requires unwavering commitment despite what we face in life. God does not follow the blueprint we have in mind. We start with preconceived notions of what we want from life; yet even the Christian life does not meet all our expectations. When hopes and expectations are crushed, we are disappointed and disheartened in the disasters. As we learn to press on in the midst of disappointments, we can look to Jesus as our model on how to stay the course as God the Holy Spirit shapes us into the image of Christ.

Jesus was no stranger to disappointment and loss. Today's passage (Matthew 14:3-14) shows us how Jesus coped with news of loss; not allowing it to affect his mission, but allowing his ministry to flow out of His disappointment. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, imprisoned John the Baptist after he confronted Herod about seducing his own sister-in-law and then divorcing his wife to marry Philip's wife. At his birthday party, he invites his step-daughter to dance, promising her anything she asks for. Her mother hated John for confronting her sin, and tells her to demand John's head on a platter. Loath to lose face before his guests, Herod beheaded John, a tragic end to his life. There was no supernatural intervention from God. Jesus and John, his cousin, had first communicated while both were still waiting to be born. John excitedly danced in his mother's womb. Later he faithfully prepared the way for Jesus and baptized him in the Jordan. Jesus declared him as the greatest of all men.

From Jesus' response to this disappointment we learn important lessons to handle our own disappointments. A very human Jesus needed time alone to process this with His Father. Jesus wrestled with painful emotions and reminders of His own impending death. Jesus had made a habit of spending time alone with His Father; time when His Father gave Him the heavenly perspective to His earthly challenges. It is safe to take our disappointments to God; many Psalms show us how to be brutally honest before God. When we try to bury our feelings, they can threaten our faith. In quietness and solitude with God, we can be healed, renewed and refueled.

However, the crowds followed Jesus. Jesus was not angry with the change to his plans, but had compassion on the crowd. Himself needing healing and empathy, He reaches out, heals their sick, and ministers to their needs. In the midst of his own pain, Jesus saw the pain of others. Identifying and empathizing with others in their suffering can make our own disappointment become an effective ministry tool, sharing our experience with others in the same boat. Our pain may not go away, but it may be recycled and re-channeled for God's purposes.

There is a time to engage and a time to withdraw (Matthew 14:23). Self-care is essential; we must care for ourselves lest we burn out. We care for ourselves by valuing solitude and waiting on God, waiting for renewed conviction and restored hope. The story of Hagar (Genesis 16) shows God's care for us. Hagar calls out in disappointment - God speaks to her, calls her by name and encourages her. Just so does God see us and know us by name.