

Deliverance from Disappointment

What Has Disappointed You Lately?

More than thirty years ago, God called me to start a new church and with sixteen people for our first service, we all were excited at what the Lord had in store for us. The only problem was that the worship leader was not very skilled, and the music was pretty bad. I went door-to-door to every house in the neighborhood with invitations to our church, though and new people started attending. Miraculously and I do not say this lightly, a college student who was a phenomenally talented worship leader decided to join us in the ministry. This was such a boon and when people visited for the first time, they always returned. Within six months, our church had grown from sixteen to over seventy. The local newspaper wrote a large article about our church, and it was most exciting. But then disappointment struck. The worship leader resigned. I had no back up plan, no one to take his place. I wish I had known back then what I know now about disappointment. It could have changed my life. Our big idea for today is this. Disappointment is a bridge, not a barrier.

I'm not sure anyone has experienced more intense disappointment than Joseph, the fiancé of Mary. The day of Jesus' birth is one of the most wonderful moments in the history of the world. In fact it is the dividing point between the two eras of time. The image of Joseph and Mary with the newly born Jesus, surrounded by shepherds is portrayed around the world and it is lovely. We generally view all of this through Mary's eyes. The angel coming to her announcing that Mary would give birth to a son and even calling her "highly favored". After proclaiming to Mary all the child would accomplish, Mary had responded with the most pertinent of questions. **"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"** (Luke 1: 34 NIV) Yes that was a great question, and the angel had a ready response. The Holy Spirit would come upon her and God Himself would make her pregnant. Mary in tremendous faith accepted what was to come. **"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.** (Luke 1:38 NIV) Something of course then happened. Mary became pregnant. Let's now turn to Joseph.

Mary already knew in advance she would be pregnant. But Joseph? **This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 1: 18 NIV) The wording here is most provocative. How was Mary found to be with child? Was she showing? What did Joseph know of this? Was he aware of the supernatural nature of the conception? It would seem not. Joseph's response is telling. **Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.** (Matthew 1: 19 NIV) It is astonishing that at the pinnacle of his hopes for the future and his dream of building a beautiful family, Joseph was thinking of divorcing Mary. I receive prayer requests from all over the world of different ones wanting me to pray the Lord provides a godly spouse. An impoverished man such as Joseph would have been filled with joy that Mary and her family accepted his proposal for them to be married and now Joseph was on the verge of throwing all that away. Disappointment is a powerful, destructive force. It wrecks us psychologically and ruins our motivation to pursue our dreams. Disappointment can in fact incapacitate us and keep us from trying to improve our lives.

Luke tells us that at some point after Mary found out that she would become pregnant through the Holy Spirit, she left her home and went to stay with her cousin Elizabeth who also was pregnant. **At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,** (Luke 1: 39 NIV) Mary spent three months there. It is possible to be showing at three months and it wouldn't be surprising if Mary did not leave right away, maybe after a week or two. Then she would have been even farther along when she eventually left Elizabeth. Could it be that word got back to Joseph while Mary was staying at Elizabeth's house in the hill country that Mary was pregnant? Without hearing Mary's side of it, in his massive disappointment, Joseph made the heartbreaking decision to just quietly divorce Mary. It would seem that Mary left without explaining matters to Joseph and somehow between her leaving and returning, Joseph heard from reliable sources that she was pregnant, and Joseph knew with certainty he was not the father.

What a tragedy it would have been if Joseph went along with his plans to divorce Mary! He didn't though and we know why. **But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."** (Matthew 1: 20-21 NIV) Few of us ever have an angel come to us and explain why our disappointment is unwarranted or even harmful to us. But you do have the Holy Spirit to clear up things for you so your



peace and joy can be restored. The problem many face is that they get too worked up to be open to what the Holy Spirit is showing them. Disappointment often leads to depression, broken relationships and failure to live up to your potential. You must not let disappointment determine the way you see yourself or others. Disappointment, if you are to be happy and full of life, must be fought and pushed out of the way. Here are five steps to getting rid of disappointment before it damages you too badly. 1. Never assume the worst. Joseph did and it nearly cost him a happy marriage as well as the opportunity to serve as God's choice to help raise the Messiah. 2. Wait for God to guide you in your next steps. It may seem like you are twiddling your thumbs, but the Holy Spirit will guide your heart in how you should proceed. 3. Refrain from complaining. The Scriptures ban complaining and if you continue to do it, bit by bit your misery will increase and your dissatisfaction with life will grow to your harm. **Do everything without complaining or arguing**, (Philippians 2: 14 NIV) 4. Practice faith that God's plan for you is good and perfect. Why assume that whatever led to your disappointment is actually bad for you? Why not go the other way and assume God is working this out for your good and without it, a better way of life would not be possible? 5. Decide Jesus is truly your Savior. What the angel said to Joseph He means for you. Jesus does save you. Salvation is far more than just getting you to heaven. It is God completely reworking you so that you will be perfect in every way and often He uses trials and difficulties and those times when you don't get your way to do just that. Keep in mind our big idea. Disappointment is a bridge, not a barrier. It can, if you let God work through what disappoints you, make you a strong person, add to your ability to withstand troubles and make you more and more like Jesus in the end. Disappointment is a bridge, not a barrier. It is the means to achieving your goals, not the limitation to keeping you from them