

Detours, Discouragements, and Disappointments

So why are we going to talk about all three together? What do they have in common? Do they have similar solutions? Truth is, you will experience all three if you are in ministry. If you are going to succeed in ministry, you have to learn how to deal with all three.

Definitions

A “detour” is “a roundabout way or course, a deviation from a direct course of action.”

“Discouragement” is defined as “to lose courage, confidence and energy.” Discouragement can cause a loss of motivation.

“Disappointment” is “the feeling of being let down, or a feeling of sadness or frustration because something was not as good or satisfactory as expected, or because something hoped for did not happen.” Enough disappointment can result in discouragement.

Warren Wiersbe observed, “Depression and discouragement are occupational hazards of the ministry.”

Roots

What is behind each of these? If they feed on each other, what starts the process?

A major source of disappointment and discouragement is those crazy things we call “expectations.” We tend to have lots of them...expectations of the Mission, of staff, of clients, of ourselves. We have expectations of results, of timing. We have realistic ones and those we don’t realize are unrealistic. There is one expectation I encourage and only one: In order to be truly prepared for ministry in the real world, we must expect ministry to be often difficult and sometimes discouraging! Expectations probably mean that we are putting our confidence in someone or something other than God. He is the only One who will always do what He says He will do and be what He says He will be.

A second root or source of discouragement is weariness. We are warned in Galatians 6:9 (KJV), “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

And 2 Thessalonians 3:13 warns, “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.”

Some definitions of weariness include:

- *Having run out of strength, patience, or endurance*
- *Lack of strength, inner drive, and motivation*
- *Unable to exert yourself anymore*
- *No more endurance*
- *Feeling like, “I’ve given out and have no more to give”*
- *Lack of strength to keep moving forward*

This feeling of exhaustion on the inside that arises when we feel like we just don’t have the strength or motivation to keep going, is one we must deal with and learn to overcome. This kind of feeling is not just because you are physically tired, it is the result of emotional and spiritual tiredness which has been allowed to set in. Getting physical rest alone won’t deal with it. Disappointments in ministry and the resulting discouragement weigh on us, and over time cause us to get weary and tired on the inside. We

don't suddenly go from being strong and courageous in God to being weary. It is not an overnight thing. It's a process of slipping backwards.

The enemy "sifts you" through pressure here and then there, one disappointment, then another, each time getting you out of the Word, further from God, and weaker spiritually. He wears you down over time, with the goal of getting you off track, away from God, and eventually to get you to give up.

A third condition that produces disappointment and discouragement is focus. We are greatly affected by our perspective. Is our focus on people and things around us – or are we focused on God and His call on our life?

We need to remind ourselves that God called us, and that His hand is upon us – He is all we need to make it. As you move into ministry, expect to be down, but don't let it take you out. Don't let disappointment and discouragement lead you to defeat.

Instead of giving in to discouragement from the disappointment of not seeing fruit from your efforts, remember your job is not to wait around to see the end result of everyone's life where you had some input. You are not in charge. God is, and He will keep tracking with what He is accomplishing in that person's life. You had the privilege to be one cog in the wheel. If being one cog in the wheel tempts you to feel insignificant, imagine a wheel without one cog. I am to be faithful in what God assigns me.

What is your perspective of the situation you find yourself in? Is God's perspective different or bigger? Disappointments may really be His-appointments (Romans 8:28). No experience in life can come in that is not Father-filtered. God has allowed these situations in my life. The delay is there because God has allowed that delay. The difficulty is there because God has allowed that difficulty. The disappointment is there because God has allowed that disappointment. The discouraging situation is there because God has allowed it. Disappointment then becomes an issue of, "Am I really going to trust God? Am I going to grumble? Am I going to complain like the Israelites and die in the desert? Or will I trust God?"

A Look Back

There are many examples in Scripture of people experiencing detours, discouragements, and disappointments. We can learn from them.

Biblical examples of people experiencing detours:

- Jonah – belly of a whale
- Paul – over the wall in a basket
- Moses – from Egypt to live with his in-laws
- Joseph – from Canaan to Egypt to save Israel

Biblical examples of people experiencing disappointments:

- Paul - 2 Timothy 1:15, everybody in Asia turned away from him.
- Moses - Exodus 15:22-27, and multiple other places where he received criticism and lack of appreciation.
- Jesus - John 5:40; John 14:9; Matthew 26:40

Biblical examples of people experiencing discouragement:

Elijah - Romans 11:3; 1 Kings 19:4,10,14

Job - Job 3, 10

Joshua - Joshua 7:7-10 after the first battle of Ai

How did they cope? Elijah felt suicidal; Moses lashed out in anger; Joshua lay down and felt like giving up (first battle of Ai). We can't afford to let disappointment cause us to take a detour from God's plan.

An anonymous writer at www.gbcdecatur.org put it this way, "Can you imagine Jesus Christ returning to heaven ahead of schedule and the angels ask, 'Jesus, You're back home ahead of schedule.' And Jesus saying, 'I'm sorry. I had a bad experience down there on earth. They didn't appreciate Me. They didn't give me the strokes I needed. They were very ungrateful for the things I was doing. I just decided to pack up my bags and come home.' Jesus didn't do that."

Paul was detoured many times. Check out the account in Acts 16:6-10. "They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

God has His reasons for allowing issues. One example is the Marah experience for the people of Israel. The Israelites were excited to find a source of water in the desert and disappointed to find it to be bitter (Exodus 15:25). God's purpose was to teach them to trust Him, a lesson He knew they would need to achieve for future experiences.

The problem that many of us have with disappointments is we get so caught up in the disappointments that we don't see that the solution is right there before our eyes...and we take the first way out that will help us feel better! You will never see God's solution as long as you're wallowing in self-pity. You've got to pray. You've got to let God show you. Ask, "God, what is the solution to this disappointment?" and God can show it to you – and will turn bitterness into sweetness.

Concerns

Christians cannot afford to take disappointment and discouragement too lightly because these are little foxes that spoil the vine (Song of Solomon 2:15).

Disappointment should not be allowed to mature into discouragement. Disappointment is normal, but despair is abnormal.

Detours can lead to disappointment that can lead to discouragement that could take you to despair, despondency, or disaster.

Craig Brian Larson says, "Unrealistic expectations curtail the joy and often the longevity of ministry. They can cause me to give up either in deed or in heart. I don't have to resign to quit. I can simply decide this job is impossible and it is foolish to try." Craig Brian Larson, *Staying Power* (p.82).

One result of not dealing with detours, discouragements, and disappointments is the chance of becoming cynical, a path that will lead to dissatisfaction, discontent, and ineffectiveness.

A very dangerous result of detours and disappointment, when left to flourish, is the potential birth of resentment, which develops into bitterness if not checked; a poison that destroys ministry and ministers. Don't rehearse it, disperse it. Give it to God.

Solutions

Scripture gives specific remedies for discouragement. Check these out:

2 Corinthians 4:1 "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart."

2 Corinthians 4:15-16 "For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

Hebrews 12:3 "For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

It truly is about perspective. I must remember that the ministry is a gift from the Lord and He will give the mercy needed to fulfill it. I also must always remember why I am doing what I am doing. Do I want to see God's grace spreading to more and more people? Do I understand what is inside of me is much more important than my outer fatigue? Do I focus on Jesus and remind myself that I want to be like Him?

It is important that we see discouragement for what it is and how it can hinder us, or even stop us. It is also important that we learn how to stop it from setting in and how to overcome it. We need to remember we are not alone.

"God uses Joseph in Egypt to save His people, and ultimately the entire human race. God uses Joseph to be part of the plan He has for the world. As Joseph endures animosity, betrayal, prison, and hardships, he did not realize that he was being prepared to fit the big picture of God's plan. And because the part designed for Joseph was so big, the preparation was so profound and painful at times. Joseph shaped the future of many nations."

- Wahid Wahba, Walk Thru the Bible

Isaiah 40:21 "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power."

Scripture says we have not because we ask not. You have a source that is powerful. Do you have a prayer team that holds you up in prayer?

2 Timothy 2:10 “For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.”

Bottom line – know your calling. Did God put you where you are? Then He will utilize the assignment as He planned and wishes. I know Who is in charge and I know His capabilities. Entrust your situations to God, knowing His character and promises. Paul said, “And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:11-12 (NIV)).

We have the responsibility of encouraging others. But what about encouraging yourself? In 1 Samuel 30:6 (KJV), “**David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.**” Psalm 42 gives us some insight of how he did this remarkable thing. He had a good talk to his discouraged soul: “Why are you in despair, O my

“The call to the ministry is an invitation to unequalled privilege - none of us would argue that. It is an invitation to unsurpassed blessing, but that is not all. The call to the ministry is also an invitation to discouragement.”

- John McAurthur

soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God” (Psalm 42:11).

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10 (KJV)).

Disappointments – give them to God. He can handle it. Joseph had every reason in the world to be resentful and to be disappointed in other people but he wasn’t. He said, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20 (NIV)).

Disappointment is inevitable, expect it!

Discouragement is a mindset; a choice you make!

Detours: see them from God’s perspective!