

Is This It? Isn't There Something More?

“Why We Get Disillusioned With God”

(Part 3)

Intro: Ever been disillusioned with God? I think every believer at some point in their spiritual journey will experience this. I know I did. 12 years ago I went from spiritual mountaintop to a spiritual death valley. (Explain: I had been obedient in every way I knew how and God allowed my life to fall apart. Obedience didn't result in blessing...it resulted in devastation.)

- Today we're going to look at some reasons why we get disillusioned with God, but we're also going to discover how to move past it.

I. God didn't answer my prayers in the way I wanted

A. Disillusionment is the result of unmet expectations

1. When our prayers don't get answered the way we have been praying we struggle with disappointment. We were praying for that job / healing / marriage / kids / praying that the circumstances would change. AND...it didn't happen! Now what?
2. Elijah had to deal with his disappointment. (Explain story) I Kings 18-19

Elijah - *I Kings 18:37* “Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” (NIV)

- Explain what happened after the miracle
- 3. Elijah's expectation was that the people would turn their hearts back to God. He ended up running for his life and was so discouraged he wanted to die.
- What do we do when God doesn't answer our prayers the way we wanted? What do we do when we feel that God has let us down?

B. Disillusionment is removed as we choose to trust God again

1. Admit your disappointment to God – He already knows you feel this way.
2. Give God your unmet expectations – Be willing to let them go. As long as you keep hanging on to expectations you will keep blaming God.
3. Trust in God's plan and perspective . Circumstances do not always indicate what God is doing. Our perspective is just too limited to judge what's happening. (Elijah's perspective was very limited. “I'm the only one left!” God told Elijah He was preserving 7000 more who followed Him. Plus, God had a plan that He unfolded for Elijah.

- This is how we get past the WHY question. If we don't eventually trust God even when we don't understand, we get stuck in “WHY”. God doesn't owe us an explanation.
- To this day even after 12 years of hind-site, my perspective is still not 20/20. There are things I still don't understand. I trust that God knows best!

II. God didn't remove the pain / discomfort when I wanted

Jer. 15:17-18 “I never joined the people in their merry feasts. I sat alone because your hand was on me. I was filled with indignation at their sins. Why then does my suffering

continue? Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook, like a spring that has gone dry.” (NLT)

A. Disillusionment is the result when we feel we can't trust God

1. When we ask God to remove the pain we're going through and He doesn't, we begin to feel as if He is unreliable / untrustworthy / maybe even unloving.
“God...C'mon...I'm in pain down here! Where is Your help?” “Where did it go?”
2. What do we do when the illness continues / your finances don't improve / when your problems go from bad to worse?

Ps. 25:16-17 “Turn to me and have mercy, for I am alone and in deep distress. My problems go from bad to worse. Oh, save me from them all!” (NLT) What do we do when it doesn't get better?

3. We can start feeling like God is unreliable. As if we can't count on Him. What are we to do?

B. Disillusionment is removed as we embrace Biblical understanding of pain

- What am I supposed to understand?
1. Understand that pain is part of our existence. There is a lot of bad teaching out there that implies everything is rosey if we follow Christ. Not true. This world is painful whether or not you follow Christ! Without this understanding you are set up for disillusionment. (There is less pain – protected from bad choices – sin)
 2. Understand that some pain is God's will
I Peter 4:19 “So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.” (NIV)
 - I don't like this verse either, but we must embrace it. Sometimes God uses our suffering as a testimony to others. How we handle the painful circumstances of life is a greater testimony than how we handle the good times!
 - Pastor Dave and his Parkinson's.
 3. Understand God uses pain / trials to perfect our faith
James 1:2-4 “Dear brothers and sisters when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.” (NLT)
 - God doesn't waste our pain in this life. He will use it to mold us and shape us into the people He wants us to be. Sometimes, God allows us to be placed upon His anvil. (Explain – heat and pressure that forges the steel and makes it stronger. – This is what God is doing with us. If we do not embrace this perspective of pain we will never move past disillusionment.

III. God allows so much pain and injustice in this world

Ps. 94:20-21 “Can unjust leaders claim that God is on their side—leaders whose decrees permit injustice? They gang up against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.” (NLT) We certainly see this today.

Jer. 12:1 “LORD, you always give me justice when I bring a case before you. So let me bring you this complaint: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy? (NLT)

A. Disillusionment is the result when we see so much injustice

1. When we look at what is taking place in this world / the evil that is rampant / the innocent people who suffer / the wicked who seem to prosper – Wall Street / It all seems so unjust / unfair / incomprehensible!
2. It can seem at times that God just doesn't care about the evil and injustices of this world. If He did, why doesn't He do something? Why doesn't He execute some justice on all this senseless evil? It appears that all these people are getting away with everything! No accountability for evil.
3. It's easy to read the paper / watch the news and ask, “Where's God in all of this?”

B. Disillusionment is removed when we embrace an eternal perspective

Ps. 73:16-17 “So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked.” (NLT)

1. We need to understand that injustice is part of this fallen world. God didn't promise justice in this life, but He did promise justice. Embracing an eternal perspective is knowing that all people will stand before a Just God someday.
2. This is the destiny of the wicked. This life is all they get. So they may get a life of ease / prosperity / pleasure / fame – in this life. So they get 60, 70, 80 years to enjoy life. BUT, that's all they get. Eternity waits for them!
3. The Bible tells us that everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I take great comfort in this fact. They may have gotten away with it on earth, but NOT in eternity. (Hitler / dictator responsible for genocide / Osama Bin Laden / even greedy Wall St. executives)
4. What if we struggle in this life for 60, 70, 80 years? We have an eternity of indescribable joy and blessing that awaits us. This is an eternal perspective!

Rom. 8:18 “Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.” (NLT)

IV. God seems distant and unresponsive

Ps. 42:3 “Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, “Where is this God of yours?” (NLT)

Ps. 10:1 “O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?” (NLT)

A. Disillusionment is the result when we feel abandoned by God

1. When we don't see or hear God in our lives it's easy to feel abandoned by Him. There have been times in my walk with the Lord when I didn't feel my prayers made it past the ceiling / I didn't feel His presence / I felt as if God had withdrawn from me.

2. I can remember feeling like I was in this darkness and crying out to God; “Where are you?” ... And hearing nothing in return.
3. It’s pretty easy in these times to feel disillusioned with God. “I thought you said you’d never leave me or abandon me? God...where are you?”

B. Disillusionment is removed as we respond with patient obedience

1. I believe there are time in our spiritual journey with God where He will purposely remain silent. It’s not because He’s not there or doesn’t love us. He is giving us the opportunity to grow. Will we follow Him / obey Him even if we don’t feel / see / or hear Him?
2. In some ways it’s like parenting. As our children grow, we need to know that they will be obedient without seeing us or hearing us. Where they are choosing to do the right thing all on their own. (maturity)
3. I believe God does the same with us at times. He remains quiet to see if we will do what we know is right. Will we continue walking the path even if we don’t see Him or hear Him? As we choose to be obedient, God rewards us with renewed intimacy.
4. I also believe there is a second reason. Sometimes He remains quiet in the dark moments of our lives so we draw close to Him.
 - Story: During one of my dark moments of my life where God was silent, Lisa and I were visiting another church. That day someone gave a testimony...
 - Disillusionment is removed with patient obedience .

V. We believe God should be predictable and understandable

A. Disillusionment is the result of our pride

1. We have made mankind too big and God too small. We want to make God more Human so we can wrap our minds around Him and understand Him. When we make God small we believe He owes us explanations and reason why He does certain things / we treat God as if He’s accountable to us.

Job 9:32 “God is not a mortal like me, so I cannot argue with him or take him to trial.” (NLT)

2. Explain the book of Job. God never gave Job an answer to WHY. He just reminded Job of who He really is. “Job, where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?”
3. God’s answer to Job’s disillusionment was to remind Job of who He is. Job’s response was one of acknowledging who he was before the all powerful Creator.

B. Disillusionment is removed when we respond with humility

- Why humility? Because when we see God for who He really is there is no other response.

Is. 55:8-9 “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” (NLT)

Is. 40:13-14 “Who is able to advise the Spirit of the LORD? Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him? Has the LORD ever needed anyone’s advice? Does he need instruction about what is good? Did someone teach him what is right or show him the path of justice?” (NLT)

1. God in His mercy has allowed us to understand Him and His ways only in part. No one can fully comprehend God or His ways. God is infinite. We are finite. He will never be completely predictable or understandable.
 2. Some people may say that if they can’t fully understand all that God is doing why should they follow Him? My response is...That’s ridiculous! Prideful!
 3. As a parent, do we require our children to understand fully what we are asking of them before we expect them to obey? Of course not! Often, it’s impossible for them to fully understand. This should be our response to God!
 4. In our scientific world we have forgotten how to be amazed and in awe of who God is. We will never fully understand / fully comprehend / the infinite. I believe we will continue learning about God for all eternity and never get the end of all that He is.
 5. Only in humility can we embrace the wonder of who God is. We need to embrace the infinite distance that is between God and us. He is the all knowing / all powerful / ever present Creator. Who are we compared to Him?
 6. Yet, this is the God who infinitely loves us and became a man and died on a cross for us. WOW! Humility is my only response...and in this response my disillusionment melts away and what I’m left with is delight!
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- Are you struggling with being disillusioned with God?
 1. Will you choose to trust God again?
 2. Will you embrace a biblical understanding of pain?
 3. Will you embrace an eternal perspective?
 4. Will you respond with patient obedience?
 5. Will you respond with humility before an incomprehensible God who loves you so much He died for you?
 - Please don’t run away from the God who loves you.
 - For those who have lost their wonder...maybe it’s time to get that back. Maybe it’s time to once again be in awe of God. Maybe you’ve been guilty of making God too small.

 - To protect yourself from disillusionment, it is essential to have a Biblical worldview. We have a class beginning this week called “Foundations” This class will help you embrace this.