

WHEN LIFE DISAPPOINTS PT7 - I COMMIT MY SPIRIT!

Scripture used: Luke 23:44-46 NLT

OVERVIEW

The final step of the process to live with and grow through disappointments is SURRENDER. In today's text, Jesus is at His deepest point of despair, suffering as He hung on the cross. He could easily have lost hope and felt completely abandoned. Vs 45 describes how, just before he died, the light from the sun was gone. But, while this could sound like the actual sun was gone, it is clear that the light was gone, but the sun was still present. Jesus knew that God's presence was never gone, even though it appeared like it was. But with this confidence, He was able to shout out for the world to hear His final words, "Father, I entrust My Spirit into Your hands!" Even Jesus had to exercise great faith by completely giving up His life into death, trusting that God would perform the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Christ!

There was a parallel illustration of this type of faith in the final stage of a ropes course, which was having to drop 80 feet with only a bungee to save you. While it is easy to turn around and go back the way you came from rather than face the adversity, the only way to move forward is to identify truths to accept and trust, and then take a leap of faith (literally). When we face adversity and disappointments in life, rather than turn around and give up, we should learn to have the Christ-like trust and faith that He had with our heavenly Father, and JUMP!

KEY POINTS

- 1) Stop fighting battles I can't win (Acceptance) - This doesn't mean quitting or giving up. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He had accepted that He had given His all and poured out His best. There was nothing left to do. There are situations that you just can't change or impact. There are battles that aren't ours to fight or to try and win. It's okay to just do all that you *can* do, and then let go.
- 2) Believe there is someone bigger and stronger (Trust) - Once we accept that we have done all that we can, we need to trust that God will finish the fight for us. Sometimes this means His answer to our prayers will be "No," but even when He says no, this answer is still working towards His victory.
 - a. Big God and Big purpose - Jesus, being the Son of God, never experienced death before. He was there at the very beginning and was always with the Father throughout time. But in vs 23, Jesus was able to entrust His soul into God's hands when He left into the abyss of death because He knew that He was a part of something greater: God's purpose that would result in victory over death. This should reassure us that in all the battles that we fight, when we give our best and surrender the rest to God, 1) Love is never wasted and 2) Pain is never wasted. *Rom 8:28* reminds us that "in ALL THINGS, God works for THE GOOD of those who love Him, who have been called according to HIS PURPOSE."
- 3) Expect something far better. Jesus was able to surrender because He knew that His sacrifice would result in something better. In the same way, for us to move forward, we have to expect that our faith will result in something better *when it comes from God*. Jesus was able to. Stephen was able to in *Acts 7:55*. When we realize the thrill of not only the leap of faith, but the thrill of the catch from the Father, we will be able to move forward and jump!
 - a. Life comes after death. We need to realize that sometimes God allows our lives to come unglued because this is the push that we need in order to surrender!
- 4) Move Forward: JUMP! - Take that step of faith and experience things that only God can do!

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** Identify a situation where you have done and said all you could, only to find that you did not make any headway. From the steps of surrender, where do you think God is leading you? Why do you think it is hard for you to do so?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** Explore why God's purpose sometimes leads us to situations where we have to take leaps of faith. Share experiences where, through surrender to God, you experienced His greater purpose.
- 3) **DO** All the steps from the "When Life Disappoints" series have been listed below. Identify one struggle or disappointment you are going through, now matter how large or small. Review the list, identify the step God is prompting you to apply, and write down one concrete next step you can take. Take that step of faith this week remembering that Christ has gone before us and found victory on the cross! Read through the "Serenity Prayer" listed below and be reminded of what it takes to experience serenity in God.

Living and Growing through Disappointment Steps

- 1) Decide to own and acknowledge my pain
- 2) Refuse to be consumed by my pain
- 3) Lock into my mission and adjust my expectations
- 4) Lean into my Faith
- 5) Forgive others
- 6) Forgive myself
- 7) Surrender

Serenity Prayer

- Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;

that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next.
Amen.