

Thankful When Life Is Disappointing



*“Be **thankful** in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” 1 Thess. 5:18 NLT*

- Are you wrestling with deep disappointment?
- Are you struggling to be thankful this Thanksgiving season?

The disciples were disappointed for at least two reasons:

1. **Jesus did not OVERTHROW the Roman Empire and establish the Messianic reign of justice and peace.** (1:6). *“6 So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, ‘Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?’”*
2. **Judas BETRAYED Jesus and the disciples** (1:17, 24-25). *“17 Judas was **one of us** and **shared in the ministry with us.**” 24 Then they all prayed, ‘O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen 25 as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has **deserted us** and gone where he belongs.’”*

Not only were the disciples disappointed with Judas betraying Jesus, but they felt betrayed, too. They spent at least three years traveling together, living together, watching the miracles of Jesus, and listening to his teaching. They were all in a discipleship process together. They were a band of brothers. Disappointment can be heard in Peter’s words in verses 17, *“**one of us** and **shared in the ministry with us.**”* and 25, *“**deserted us.**”*

The Central Lesson

Sometimes, we must choose to be thankful even when we do not feel like it—believing God will bless us.

How to Respond to Disappointment and Grow in Thankfulness

1. **REMINDE** yourself that God is real and the Bible is true (1:1-3). *“3 During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he **proved to them** in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.”* During times of deep disappointment, people frequently question God’s ways, His existence, the Bible’s truthfulness, and much more. Luke begins the book of Acts with a reminder that, as he wrote in the Gospel of Luke, that he interviewed eyewitnesses to the teachings, miracles, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian faith is based on objective historical evidence. It can be trusted. But during times of disappointment, we may need to remind ourselves that God is real and the Bible is true. This should help us to express thankfulness even when we do not feel like it.
2. **Patiently WAIT** for God’s promised blessing (1:4-5). *“4 Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, ‘Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the **gift he promised**, as I told you before.’”*

Jesus promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit after he ascended to heaven. But, they had to wait, and it occurred, as seen in Acts 2. Many times we have to wait patiently for God’s promised blessing. This should help us to express thankfulness even when we do not feel like it.

3. **God has a CALENDAR, and His plans are a secret - trust Him (1:6-7).**

*“7 He replied, ‘The Father alone has the authority to **set those dates and times**, and they are **not for you to know.**’”*

4. **Depend upon the Holy Spirit’s POWER to face life’s challenges (1:8).**

“8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The disciples had a huge challenge—taking the gospel to the entire world. They would not be able to accomplish this in their natural strength, they needed the power of the Holy Spirit. That same power is available to us, too. This should help us to express thankfulness even when we do not feel like it

5. **Live with ANTICIPATION of the return of Christ (1:9-11).**

*“10 As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. 11 ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday **he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!**’”*

Christians should live in anticipation that Jesus could return at any time. Disappointing circumstances can change very quickly and unexpectedly. This should help us to express thankfulness even when we do not feel like it.

6. **OBEY** God’s word (1:12-15).

“15 During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them.”

The disciples obey what Jesus had told them to do. As a result, they were in place to experience God’s blessing of the coming Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Obedience to God’s Word places us in position to be blessed by God. This should help us to express thankfulness even when we do not feel like it

7. **Move forward in life, making the best DECISIONS possible (1:21-26).**

“24 Then they all prayed, ‘O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen 25 as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs.’ 26 Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.”

The position of an apostle needed to be filled because of the vacancy of Judas. Peter and the disciples moved forward in making a decision about the replacement the best they knew how. God led them, and Matthias was chosen. God will help us make important decisions. This should help us to express thankfulness even when we do not feel like it.

Conclusion - Sometimes, we must choose to be thankful even when we do not feel like it—believing God will bless us.

Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday’s Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.