

## DISAPPOINTMENTS NEW CHRISTIANS FACE

### Introduction

1. Sincere Christians rejoice greatly in witnessing someone obeying the gospel (cp. **Luke 15:7**) and begin walking in the truth (**2 John 1:4**; **3 John 1:3-4**).
2. But, unfortunately, not all those that obey the gospel continue to grow as they should (cp. **Luke 8:13-14**) because they become overwhelmed with problems and disappointments. This ought to concern mature Christians because we have a responsibility to those who are young in the faith (**Galatians 6:1-2**; **Romans 15:1-2**).
3. In this lesson we shall consider three common disappointments that new Christians face in their walk with God; having said that, these are disappointments that even Christians of many years may face.



### I. SAME WEAKNESSES AS BEFORE

Disappointed with self.

- A. Joy in believing (**Romans 15:13**). Believing on Jesus, repenting of one's sins, and having received the forgiveness of sins births joy.
  1. An individual. After the Ethiopian eunuch obeyed the gospel, it is said that "he went on his way rejoicing" (**Acts 8:39**).
  2. A household. After the Philippian jailer and his household obeyed the gospel, there was much rejoicing (**Acts 16:34**).
  3. A great many in a city. After obeying the gospel, those in the city of Samaria rejoiced greatly (**Acts 8:8**).
- B. The inevitability of temptations (**Luke 8:13**). Satan is always seeking those whom he may devour (**1 Peter 5:8**). He seeks to do this through temptations (cp. **Matthew 4:1-11**).
  1. An individual. Simon the sorcerer was converted, but was tempted to offer the apostles money for the power to impart the gift of the Spirit. Peter condemned him and he promptly repented (**Acts 8:9-25**).
  2. A couple. Satan tempted Ananias and Sapphira to lie; they both yielded and were killed (**Acts 5:1-11**).
  3. A church. Paul was concerned that the brethren in Thessalonica may have yielded to Satan's temptation to fall away. But Paul had nothing to fear because they had not yielded (**1 Thessalonians 3:1-5**).
- C. What can be done?
  1. What God has done: (i) He has provided spiritual armor that we might protect ourselves from the onslaughts of Satan (**Ephesians 6:10-18**), (ii) He has promised to provide a way out of every temptation and will not allow us to be tempted above that which we can bear (**1 Corinthians 10:13**; **James 4:7**), and, (iii) He has provided an advocate with the Father to make intercession for us (**1 John 2:1-2**).
  2. What we can you do: (i) Make sure you are maintaining your relationship with God through prayer - you speaking to God (**Luke 22:40**; **1 Thessalonians 5:17**) and study - God speaking to you (**1 Peter 2:1-3**; **Colossians 3:16**; **Galatians 5:16**). A failure to maintain your relationship with God will inevitably mean you will fail in all areas of your lives, (ii) Guard your heart (**Proverbs 4:23**): keep your mind focused on things above (**Colossians 3:2**), set no wicked thing before your eyes (**Psalms 101:3**), and keep yourself separate from the world (**1 John 2:15-17**), (iii) learn how to put on and use the armor God had provided (**Ephesians 6:11**), (iv) make no provision for the flesh (**Romans 13:14**).
  3. What others can do: mature brethren are able to help you by reminding you of God's willingness to forgive and provide strength (**1 John 1:9**; **2:1**; **Philippians 2:12-13**), teaching you that transformation is an on-going process (**Romans 12:1-2**; **Colossians 3:5-11**), and bearing your burden (**Galatians 6:1-2**).

## II. IMPERFECT CHRISTIANS

Disappointed with brethren.

### A. Hypocrisy:

1. Peer pressure. Peter withdraws from the Gentiles and even leads Barnabas astray for fear of his Jewish brethren (**Galatians 2:11-14**).
2. Immorality. Some preach morality, but are themselves immoral (**1 Corinthians 5:1-13**; cp. **Romans 2:21-23**).
3. Partiality. Fussing over rich visitors and ignoring poor visitors (**James 2:1-6**).

### B. Unfaithfulness:

1. Turning back. John Mark turned back and went to Jerusalem while with Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey (**Acts 13:13**; cp. **15:36-41**).
2. Straying. Hymenaeus and Philetus strayed from the truth and preached false doctrine (**2 Timothy 2:16-18**).
3. Forsaking. Demas forsook Paul and fell away due to his love of the world (**2 Timothy 4:9-10**).

### C. What can be done?

1. What God has promised: (i) He has promised to “never forsake you” (**Hebrews 13:5**), (ii) despite any discouragement, He will give you the strength to carry on (**Philippians 4:13**), (iii) He provides others to comfort (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**) and encourage us (**Romans 1:11-12**) – Barnabas was an encourager (**Acts 11:23**).
2. What you can do:
  - a. What you need to realize: (i) Your faith is your own. It is you that shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ (**Romans 14:10**), which means you strive on your own to obtain the prize; we must not allow the behavior of others to become an excuse to fall away<sup>1</sup> (**1 Corinthians 9:24**). Note Paul’s attitude when all forsook him: “But the Lord stood with me” (**2 Timothy 4:16-18**), (ii) You are seeking to please God (**2 Corinthians 5:9**), not men, and obtain His praise (**Romans 2:29**), and (iii) you must “work out [cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete] your own salvation with fear and trembling” (**Philippians 2:12**).
  - b. Change your focus – don’t focus on those that discourage you, focus on those that encourage you (**Philippians 2:19**; **1 Thessalonians 3:2**; **Hebrews 6:11-12**), (ii) encourage yourself in the Lord (**1 Samuel 30:6**), (iii) give yourself to prayer and study (**Psalms 119:25, 28**; **Jeremiah 15:16**).
3. What others can do: (i) encourage those that are discouraged (**1 Thessalonians 5:14**). Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to encourage the brethren (**1 Thessalonians 3:1-2**), (ii) Set yourself forth as an example of steadfastness in the face of discouragement (**1 Timothy 4:12**; **Titus 2:6-8**); encouraging them to press on (**Philippians 3:12-14**), (iii) show them that others are experiencing the same discouragement (**1 Peter 5:8-9**).

## III. LIVING IN THE WORLD

Disappointed by the world.

### A. Worldly discouragements:

1. Some Christians become discouraged at the wickedness in the world. Lot’s soul was vexed by the wickedness he witnessed every day (**2 Peter 2:7-8**).
2. Some Christians become discouraged by persecution (**1 Thessalonians 3:1-8**).
3. Some Christians become weary of struggling against sin (**Hebrews 12:3-4**).
4. Some Christians become discouraged by crisis. Job suffered a crisis that none of us have or likely will experience. While he did experience discouragement, he remained faithful to God (**James 5:11**).

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<sup>1</sup> We sing a song titled “I Have Decided To Follow Jesus” (#299), and the second verse reads, “Tho’ none go with me I still will follow, no turning back”. This is the attitude we ought to adopt.

B. What you can do:

1. Be encouraged by Jesus' prayer. Jesus warned that disciples would have trouble in the world (**John 16:33**), but Jesus prayed to the Father asking that He would "keep them from the evil one" (**John 17:15**).
2. Be encouraged by Jesus' example. Jesus understands the temptations and discouragements we face and can sympathize with us (**Hebrews 4:14-16**). Jesus Himself endured all manner of sufferings because He kept in view the joy that was before Him (**Hebrews 12:2**).
3. Be encouraged by God's Sovereignty. Whatever we face, God will ensure that all things work together for our good (**Romans 8:28**).

C. What can others do?

1. Demonstrate what it means to "seek first the kingdom of God" (**Matthew 6:33**).
2. Make it clear by your example who it is we love the most (i.e., not our jobs, hobbies, etc.) (**1 John 2:15-17**).
3. Develop close friendships with new Christians (**Acts 2:46; 4:32; Romans 12:15**). Friendships centered around Christ and His work, not just social interests.

**Conclusion**

1. There are many other disappointments new Christians face, but we have considered three of the most common: facing the same temptations and experiencing the same weaknesses, hypocritical brethren, and difficulties living in the world.
2. Whatever the discouragement we may face, there is always something we can do, and mature brethren are always at hand to help us.
3. In closing let us read this passage from Hebrews...

"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul'" (**Hebrews 10:35-39**).