



DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENTS

A few weeks ago, I was watching *Make It or Break It* on ABC Family. The show is about a group of gymnasts on an elite gymnastics team. In the episode I watched, the girls on the show were competing at a huge meet that was going to determine who got to be part of the All-American Gymnastics Team.

One gymnast had invited her mother to the meet, but as she went through each performance, she looked up in the stands and her mother wasn't there. She was disappointed that her mom didn't care enough to come to the meet.

At the same time, her dad's girlfriend (played by Candace Cameron Bure - a great actress and Christian role model) called the girl's mother to find out why she didn't come. The girl's mother said that she had been threatened by her ex-husband, and that he told her not to come. Her character was disappointed in her boyfriend, because she didn't know he was that kind of person.

Another girl was determined to be the best and to make it onto the All-American Team and go to the Olympics. She had the highest scores of the day and only had one performance left—the uneven bars. As she went through her routine, she fell and broke her back. She wasn't paralyzed, but the doctor told her that she couldn't do gymnastics anymore, because she couldn't risk another injury to her back. All her plans and dreams came crashing down around her and she began to drown in discouragement.

These people, though they are fictional characters, were all battling some type of disappointment or discouragement. Do you know what that feels like? Do you ever feel like everything has gone wrong? Like nothing else bad could happen... and then it does?

We all have to deal with disappointments and discouragement sometimes. But we can have hope through the hard times, because we have a God that never leaves us - even when things aren't so great.

Romans 5:3-5 says, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

You see, when you're dealing with something disappointing or discouraging, the most important thing is your perspective. If you look at the things you're going through, sometimes they can feel so big and so overwhelming. But nothing is too big for God.

With the right outlook on things, we can glorify God through our disappointments and learn to trust in Him for healing and comfort.

In their book, *One Girl Can Change the World*, Claudia Mitchell and Kim Goad conclude, "People will fail you, circumstances will fail you, and sometimes you'll just plain fail yourself." That statement is so true.

When we put our faith in people, plans and ourselves, we're always setting ourselves up for disappointment. Because we're all imperfect people and we live in an imperfect world, things aren't always going to go like we want them.

Some things in life are just out of our control—getting injured while playing sports and having to sit out of a game or season; having a close friend move away; losing a family member or friend to an accident or illness; having a big fight with a friend...

When we're faced with hard times like these, it's human nature for us to question God. We want to cry and stomp our feet and say, "God, this isn't the way I wanted things." But when our circumstances are out of our control, that's when we need to trust God the most.

I live in Alabama, so I'm a big Crimson Tide fan. Last month, when Alabama played Texas in the BCS Championship football game, Colt McCoy (quarterback for Texas) was injured early in the game. He had to sit on the sidelines and watch his team struggle through the game. When the game was over, a reporter walked up to Colt and asked him what it felt like to watch his team lose.

I really felt sorry for him; I knew he had to be disappointed that he didn't get to play. This game is the biggest game in college football. And it was Colt McCoy's last game as a college player, so you know he wanted to be on that field more than anything. While I was shaking my head at the question, Colt McCoy took a minute to gather his thoughts and said, "I always give God the glory. I never question why things happen the way they do. God is in control of my life. And I know that if nothing else, I'm standing on the Rock."

Even in the midst of disappointment, Colt McCoy gave glory to God. He has the right perspective.

See, God lets us go through painful or difficult things so we can be better witnesses for Him. Think about how many people Colt McCoy got to witness to because his team lost that game. It wasn't the outcome Colt had wanted, but because he surrendered to God and trusted God's plan, he was able to praise God about it anyway.

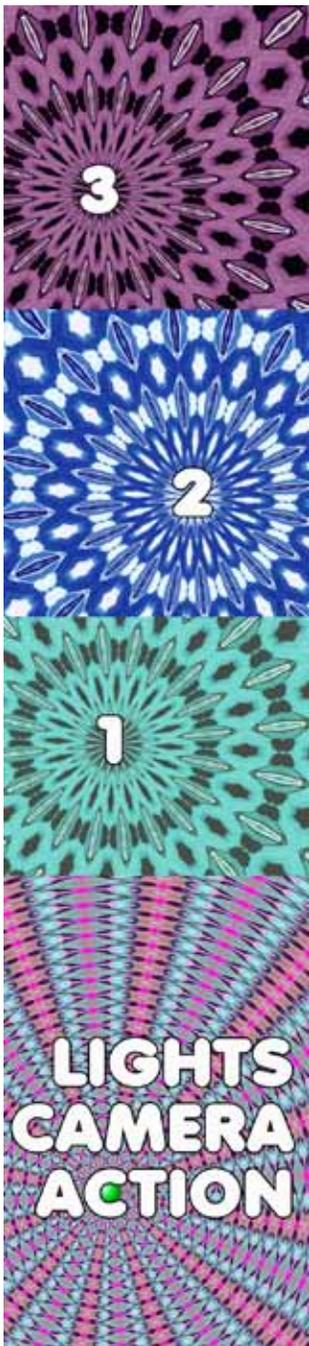
God works out all of our experiences for our good (Romans 8:28). He has a plan for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11), He loves us (John 3:16), and He will be there for us when we need Him (Psalm 46:1).

So what's the best way to deal with our disappointments? Give them to God.

Do you remember the story about Moses leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land? When they got there, they sent spies into the land. When the spies came back, they told the people that the land was inhabited by giants with strong cities and armies.

The children of Israel were disappointed, and they doubted God. Only Caleb stood up to say that God would help them take the land if they would just trust Him. Because Caleb had faith and trusted God, he was rewarded and got to see the Promised Land. The rest of the people who doubted God never got to live in the Promised Land.

The life God has planned for us is like the Promised Land. We'll have to go through disappointments on our way there, but if we have faith and trust in God, we will get to live there and experience the great things He wants for us. If we don't have faith, then we may never make it to the Promised Land and we may miss out on a lot of the blessings God has in store for us.



SCENE ONE/TAKE ONE

GIRLS NIGHT IN—A NIGHT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

MOVIE NIGHT FEATURING "RAISE YOUR VOICE" STARRING HILLARY DUFF*

*The movie "Raise Your Voice" is rated PG. If your parents want more information about the movie, they can go to www.raiseyourvoicemovie.com.

Friendship can be one of the greatest tools in dealing with disappointments. Invite all your friends over for a Night of Encouragement to strengthen your friendships and dive into God's Word for truths about His faithfulness.

Make a pact with your friends that there will be no negative comments or bad attitudes at this party. Try to encourage each other and lift each other up.

Get your parents' permission to rent the movie "Raise Your Voice" starring Hilary Duff (and if you're a little sappy like I am, get a few boxes of Kleenex). Pop some popcorn, fill some bowls with your favorite candy and serve hot chocolate while you watch the movie with your friends.

When the movie's over, grab your Bibles and do a little digging into God's Word...

1. What was Terri's favorite thing to do? _____
2. Why do you think Terri's dad didn't want her to go to the music school in L.A.? _____

3. Terri was disappointed with her dad's decision, but she was willing to obey him. Paul, on the other hand, wanted her to stand up for herself and go to the school anyway. Which one was right about how we should treat our parents? (Check out Exodus 20:12 and Matthew 15:4) _____

4. After the wreck, how did Terri deal with her grief and disappointment? _____

5. Why do you think Terri didn't want to sing anymore? _____

6. Terri's mom and aunt tricked her dad so that Terri could go to the school in L.A. Read the story of Jacob in Genesis 27. Jacob's mom tricked his dad in the same way. Do you think Terri was wrong for going to the school? _____

Or do you think she did the right thing by obeying her mom? _____

When you have two people in authority over you that tell you different things, it's hard to decide which person to obey. That's why we can't serve God and man at the same time (Matthew 6:24).

7. The people at the school with Terri have so many different talents. What does that tell you about God? _____

8. Why do you think God gives us so many different gifts and talents? _____

9. If God gave you a talent, should you be disappointed that you can't do something else? (For example, if you're a great singer, should you envy your friend who is a great painter? Should she envy you for your voice? Or should you appreciate the way God made you and use the gifts He's blessed you with?) _____

Check out Psalm 139:14. What does that tell you about the way God created you? _____

10. When Terri sees the video Paul sent into the school, all of her guilt and pain comes back and she wants to quit. When we're disappointed with our circumstances (or with ourselves, like Terri is) we often just want to give up. But God tells us to keep going. Check out these verses: Philippians 3:14, Philippians 4:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Thessalonians 3:12-13, 1 Timothy 4:12-15. _____

11. After Terri talks to Jay and he *encourages* her, she starts to feel better. Her singing improves, she starts to make friends, and she just seems happier. God gave us friends because He knew that we would need encouragement sometimes. Pass out index cards, have each girl at the party write her name on a card, then put all the cards into a bowl. Pass the bowl around and draw a card, making sure no one gets her own name. Now have each girl write a short note of encouragement (it can be a favorite Scripture, song lyrics, or a personal note) about the person whose card she drew. Girls will hand these back to the leader who will distribute them to the people whose names are on the cards.

12. Terri's choir teacher both challenges and encourages her at the same time. Do you have a person in your life who does that for you? _____

That's what God does for us. He challenges us to be like Christ, and encourages us to get back up and try again when we fail. Check out these verses: 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Joshua 1:9, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. _____

13. What can you learn about Terri about forgiveness after Jay disappoints her? _____

14. Terri's dad wants to protect her from everything because he doesn't want to see her get hurt. God doesn't want to see us get hurt either, but He knows that sometimes we have to experience hard things so that He can teach us and mold us into better witnesses of Himself. Does knowing God has a plan for your life (Jeremiah 29:11) and that He works all things together for your good (Romans 8:28) help you when you're feeling disappointed or discouraged? How? _____

15. Terri and Jay's song, "Someone's Watching Over Me" is a great reminder that God never leaves us and that He is always watching and working in our lives. List some ways that God has protected or blessed you recently. _____

To end your "Night of Encouragement" bash, play some of your favorite praise and worship music and worship with your friends. No matter how discouraged you may have felt before the party, worship always lifts your spirit because it takes the focus off you and puts it back where it belongs—on GOD.

Never forget that YOU are special! God created you, and He has joy in you! I'm so thankful for the opportunity to get to share with you each month. I would love to get to know all of you, so find me on Facebook or email me at cmhopper.warrior@gmail.com.

Love,

Christina



Christina Hopper is 23 years old. She attends Sulphur Springs FWB Church in Northport, Alabama and loves singing, cooking and reading. She is active in her local WAC group and coaches UPWARD Cheerleading at her church. Her favorite Bible verse (right now, anyway) is Ephesians 4:29. Look it up and live it out. (That's what she's trying to do.)