

JANUARY STUDY

*Praising Him  
in Disappointments*



*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (Psalm 42:11 )*

It's not easy to relinquish what we grip so tightly when every muscle is tensed to guard against its release. We hold on with clenched fists as though we have the power to prevent the loss of the object, person, idea, dream, or plan by sheer will and determination.

And then, in a breath, it's gone. Our clenched fists clutch nothing but emptiness.

What we wanted didn't happen—or it happened in a way other than what we had hoped. Our faith shaken, we find ourselves stunned, hurt, broken, disappointed, and uncertain.

Then come the questions. Why? How could God...? What now? How do I move forward? What of my faith? Faith. Did I not have enough? Is that why God didn't...?

Heartrending disappointments shatter our world and bring unwelcome change. They hurt deeply and can cause us to question our faith, our path, our sanity...our God.

Take care—doubt can erode faith one disappointment at a time.

If “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), disappointment is the evidence of things seen that are *not* the substance of things hoped for.

Perhaps, therein lies the problem. Our hope, when placed in things and not in God, is a recipe for despair.

“hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him...” (Psalm 42:11c). But how? How do we go from disappointment to praising God?

## **NAME IT**

I am disappointed. And, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank).

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?” (Psalm 42:11a)

When something or someone fails to satisfy the hope, desire, or expectation we have, disappointment is the result. We feel sadness, loss, grief, discouragement, displeasure, unhappiness, and even anger.

No one is immune to disappointment. We all experience it—

with self, family, friends, coworkers, church, heroes, plans, and even with God.

Plans fail. People fail us. Hopes and dreams are crushed. It's human to be disappointed. How we deal with disappointment is what matters.

And, yes, there is a right response. No, it's not always easy. And, yes, we all have had (or will have) that "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me" moment (Psalm 22:1).

From Adam and Eve in the beginning right through to the end, the Bible tells the story of disappointment and redemption.

Remember Joseph? *He believed God* had a good plan even in the midst of horrible circumstances. And, he forgave those who had disappointed him most.

Remember Job? *He was honest and open* about what he felt in his display of grief but was careful not to sin with his actions or his lips. (Job 1:20-22)

Remember David? As a writer *he was transparent*, giving great insight into the emotions he felt.

Remember Jesus? Thirty-three years of disappointments culminated with the cry "My God, My God, *why...?*" (Matthew 27:46c).

## Reflective Questions

What words best describe your disappointments?

Which Bible character's disappointment resonates most clearly with you? Why?

What can you learn from the way Joseph dealt with disappointments? (Genesis 37-50)

What do you think of David's pre-echo of Jesus' cry on the cross? (Psalm 22:1)

## OWN IT

Disappointment is personal. And, so is our response to it—right or wrong, weak or strong, it is *our* response to *our* disappointment, and we need to own it.

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me” (Psalm 42:11a)? Be honest. Feelings aren’t wrong; they spring from deep within. Disappointment casts a shadow of change, and all feels off kilter.

Be transparent. Don’t stuff it deep within and cover it over with a smile. Someone is watching you and needs to see that you, too, struggle. If you have “WHY?” questions, ask them, even if there no answers are available.

Be open. Get it out where you can see it and others can hear it. In your sharing, tell God honestly what you feel and why you feel it. Accept support. See this as opportunity for growth.

### Reflective Questions

What is your immediate reaction when disappointment comes?  
What emotions do you experience?

Which disappointments do you wish you could share with others but fear of rejection or criticism keeps you silent?

In Psalms 42 and 43 the psalmist asked “Why?” ten times. Was it wrong for the psalmist to ask why or to question God? Explain.

Ask yourself as the Psalmist did, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me”(Psalm 42:5a)? Own it—I am filled with disappointment because....

## RELEASE IT

When the plans you were certain God had for you, that you had taken and run with fall into disarray and confusion—what is your reaction?

“For I shall....” (Psalm 42:11d). When you pour everything you are into urgent, beseeching prayer asking God to move on behalf of your hopes and dreams—and He doesn’t—what is your immediate reaction?

“For I shall....” (Psalm 42:11d). What happens when “My God, my God; why?” has no satisfying answer?

“For I shall....” (Psalm 42:11d). Is your response like David’s in 2 Samuel 12:20—get up, wash the tears from your face, worship, eat, and get on with life? Or, is it to become bogged down in what wasn’t and fail to move forward?

“For I shall....” (Psalm 42:11d). What should you do when disappointment casts a long shadow over your life? Open your clenched fists and release it. That’s what you do.

Release your hold on what *wasn’t* and grasp God’s sovereign will and plan for what *is*. (What “is” is where you are in your disappointment and your first step into what’s next for you.)

- Open your mind to the possibilities. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10a).
- Open your heart to what God is doing. “This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).
- Face forward—that is where new hope is kindled. “I shall yet praise Him” (Psalm 43:5d).
- Remember God’s past goodness and faithfulness (Psalm 86:15; Psalm 111).
- Know that God doesn’t change (Psalm 102:27).
- Trust God’s love—nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).
- Realize that you can make peace with the “why” questions because of Hebrews 4:14-16.

Throughout Psalms we find that the cure for disappointment is focusing on God's faithfulness in the past, opening the heart to God's love in the present, and praising Him for His faithfulness yet to come (Psalm 34).

### Reflective Questions

What keeps you from releasing your hold on what was (or wasn't) and embracing what is and can be?

Disappointments create shadows in our joy-filled lives. How do you cope?

What does Psalm 46:10 say to you about your disappointments?  
About praise?

Psalm 43:5d looks beyond disappointment and embraces the possibility of a brighter day. In the midst of your disappointed backward gazing, how easy is it to face forward?

## EMBRACE HIM

Jesus is the answer to every disappointment, every *why* we utter, and our reason for praise. “Praise him...the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psalm 42:11d).

*His humanity* (acquainted with grief/disappointment). He was a disappointment to many of His followers, and He felt disappointment because of the actions (or inactions) of others. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1a). “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:3).

*His sovereignty* (LORD over all). “The earth is the LORD’s, and the

fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1; Psalm 22:28). “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16).

*His faithfulness* (in good times and bad times). (Psalm 22:24; Psalm 42:7, 8) “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

*His role* (Shepherd and Mediator). “Our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep...make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ....” (Hebrews 13:20-21; John 10:11; Hebrews 4:14-16).

### Reflective Questions

Praise Him in the valley- of disappointment, of dashed hopes, of failed dreams. Read Psalm 23. Then, answer the questions below.

Our Sovereign Shepherd was a sheep for 33 years. How does that help you embrace Him and offer praise in the valley of disappointment?



Our Faithful Shepherd has only your best at heart and provides opportunities that foster growth in you. How does this truth effect you in light of the disappointments you experience?

Even in the valley of the shadow and in the presence of our enemies, our Shepherd is hands-on in His approach to our care. In light of this, what would an attitude of praise look like for you? To those watching you?

Your Good Shepherd loves you to death and back. How can you offer Him the sacrifice of praise even when doing so goes against everything you feel and experience?

*“They cried unto thee, and were delivered:  
they trusted in thee, and were not  
confounded.” (Psalm 22:5)*

About the Writer: Suzan Hutchinson, when not working as Ops Manager for Lune North America, attending church at Cofer’s Chapel, enjoying family, entertaining a certain redheaded granddaughter, or walking the trails at the Nashville Zoo, can be found outside down and dirty in the garden.