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## Spiritual Formation Part 17

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### Dealing with Disappointments

#### James 1:5-8

**Take the Initiative!** We have to take the initiative in our spiritual formation. We must reach out and accept His Hand; allow Him lead you out. Do not try to swim by yourself, as the waters of life are too strong; the currents and tides of desires and wrong opportunities will overwhelm us. Anticipate what may lie ahead and prepare; this is James' whole point! Unequivocally, we have to reach out for Christ and Him only! We can choose not to be bitter, rather be better! What we receive from God is good. What we receive from self and others, with personal agendas that are not centered on God, will be bad and distract us from our growth. If we are being real with our spiritual formation, we will realize our need for Christ and our continual need for His wisdom (Matt. 5:3)!

- *Tossed* refers to being unstable, immature, and weak in faith (Eph. 4:14-16). We only become un-tossed by the Anchor of who Christ is in us, and pursuing Him!
- *Sea* is a term that drove fear into Jews then; they did not venture into the ocean, but relied on others to do that in fishing and commerce (Isa. 57:20).
- *Double minded* refers to being unstable emotionally and in thoughts, like a split personality or *schizophrenia*. It also means to be a person who has two souls in conflict, two desires that cannot be reconciled, two masters who ask different things at the same time. This is "I want my will *and* God's will." This just cannot be!
- *Doubt*, along with *double-minded*, is also a form of inconsistent living and hypocrisy, and is greatly condemned by God. It is saying one thing and doing another (1 Chron. 12:33; Psalm 12:2; Matt. 6:24; James 4:8). This is also indecision! It is not being willing to make up your mind and go in the right direction!
- *Unstable*. We are called to make decisions based on God's values and not our ideas or indecisions. How does our decision affect others? How is it relational and beneficial to others and God's glory?

**Disappointments are the collision between our expectations and experiences, while ignoring the signposts of God's promises.** Our expectations will collide with our experiences and then create a wrecked life of self-pity and resentment. Or, that can lead to a triumphant life. The choice is ours and the key is where we look for our hope! This is about our circumstances and how we look at our Lord. How we see adversity

and His sovereignty will totally affect how we learn and deal with it (Phil 1:27-30). Unanchored stress and disappointments along with detachment from looking to God, will take us away from seeing His signposts of precepts. Thus, we ignore God's plan and this dumps us in the middle of a tossed sea (Job 23:10; Rom. 5:3-5; 1 Thess. 5:16-18). We cannot just expect God to get us through without any effort on our part. To grow, we have to struggle and work it out (Phil. 2). It is the struggle that helps us; it is what builds us and forms us. Without it, there is no growth or real impacting faith, honest character, genuine patience, or maturity (Prov. 3:5-6; 20:30; Job. 36:5; Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 1:9; 1 Peter 1:6-7). When we do not rely on God, we are, in fact, not taking care of ourselves by helping Him out; rather we are insulting Him!

**The key is to learn to take your life and your surroundings as they are, and then strive to build them to what they can be for His glory**, not just as you wanted it. If our hearts and minds are divided between seeking God or seeking ourselves, we will become double minded and unstable. We will become spiritually and emotionally unstable and thus sink in the waves of stress and life! We will literally be torn apart spiritually and physically by our stress and worry, because we have not yielded to Him. Let go and let God; allow your wholehearted devotion to be on Christ and not on yourself. God will not make your decisions for you; you need to seek His precepts and distil what is best for value's and character's sake; then, He will enable us to form it and grow (Isa. 26:3; Matt. 6:33)

**What do I do when I am overwhelmed?** Ask God for help; for He is able! Trust in His control! He is the God who can keep us walking above the waves, and keep us alive and going when we are under them! Go through His Word, seek what you are to learn, how you can get through, and for wisdom. If we do not learn, all those "waves" will just be a waste, and perhaps we will keep going through them until we do learn (Psalm 142:1-7; John 7:17; 1 Peter 1:6-7). Do not escalate your situation by complaining, or distort it by denial, bitterness, or isolation! Do not be dumb, trapped in your own anger and regret. Be smart; be a Christian who learns and grows and who is committed to obedience, spiritual growth, and maturity. Instead of moaning, seek His grace to solve the situation! Do not blame, or seek fault in others or yourself; rather, get on with life and your commitment to Christ. Allow His amazing work in you! Resistance to God, our bad attitudes, and anger only cause us more harm, choosing for ourselves to be tossed by the seas of life without hope or purpose. Let Christ be your anchor, or else you will drown and your life will be a series of wasted opportunities. When you could have and should have grown, you will have squandered His call and put your energies into complaints, and your mindsets and attitudes into bitterness and anger. We need to come to the point that we trust in the Lord, regardless of how good or how bad life is, for it is temporary. What we learn will be eternal (John 7:17-18)!

### **Questions**

1. What would be a healthy Biblical balance for you to be free and spontaneous yet be pious and reliant on Him?

2. What causes you to be *unstable*?
3. What do you do when you are overwhelmed? Because of this passage, what will you do now?
4. What happens in your life that causes you to be overwhelmed?
5. What do you need to do to become more stable and to have an Anchor for the storms of life?
6. How can you handle disappointments better? What can your church do to help you?
7. How do you make decisions? How can this passage help you be more decisive?
8. How will you receive, act on, obey, and trust in God's promises?
9. How does Faith give us the promise of God, hope, and confidence?
10. What happens when Doubt comes into your life? What will you do about it next time it happens?