

A. PITFALL OF DISAPPOINTMENT

- Living in a broken world is sure to bring disappointment. We have come to expect it. *But what about those times when we feel disappointed in God?*
- We can have differences with people in our lives which land us in the Pit of negative emotions and interrupted relationship. The same can happen with God: Is 55:8 NLT -- "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine."
- This psalm describes just such a situation. The writer had trusted in God, but things had turned very differently than he expected: Psalms 44 NIV -- We have heard it with our ears, O God; our ancestors have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago. ²With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our ancestors; you crushed the peoples and made our ancestors flourish.
³It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. ⁴You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. ⁵Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes. ⁶I put no trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; ⁷but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. ⁸In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever.
⁹But now you have rejected and humbled us; you no longer go out with our armies. ¹⁰You made us retreat before the enemy, and our adversaries have plundered us.
¹¹You gave us up to be devoured like sheep and have scattered us among the nations.
¹²You sold your people for a pittance, gaining nothing from their sale. ¹³You have made us a reproach to our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us. ¹⁴You have made us a byword among the nations; the peoples shake their heads at us. ¹⁵I live in disgrace all day long, and my face is covered with shame ¹⁶at the taunts of those who reproach and revile me, because of the enemy, who is bent on revenge.
¹⁷All this came upon us, though we had not forgotten you; we had not been false to your covenant. ¹⁸Our hearts had not turned back; our feet had not strayed from your path. ¹⁹But you crushed us and made us a haunt for jackals; you covered us over with deep darkness.
²⁰If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, ²¹would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart? ²²Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.
²³Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. ²⁴Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? ²⁵We are brought down to the dust, our bodies cling to the ground. ²⁶Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love.
- The psalmist starts off waiting well. He used some effective strategies for staying out of the Pit while he waited on God to work things out. (Focus on His deeds, character, love, vv. 1-8)
- He and the people of his time had extended faith in God's Word. He promised them victory if they remained obedient to Him, but defeat came instead: Dt 28:7 -- The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face
- Because the disappointment was so painful and perplexing, his focus soon shifted from God's character to the circumstances and the feelings that went with them.
- The pathway to the Pit looks something like this:

GOD'S WORD → EXPECTATION → DISAPPOINTMENT → DOUBT → LIE → THE PIT

- God had a different pathway and timeline than they expected. This outcome provided an opportunity to either take offense at God or to wait upon Him.
- Seeing God through the filter of our feelings lets doubt come in. From our view point it seems that He isn't who He says He is nor does He do what He says He'll do.
- When we entertain doubts about God's character, we start down that slippery slope of blaming and accusing God. (vv. 9 – 14)
- Holding onto doubt about the Lord makes us susceptible to some common lies:
 - When God's promise is delayed, we can fall prey to the lie that God has forgotten us: Is 49:14ff NIV – "But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.' Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands"
 - We believe that we know a better way than God's way. The basis of this lie is judgment and pride: Ezekiel 18:25 -- You say, 'The Lord isn't doing what's right!' Listen to me, O people of Israel. Am I the one not doing what's right, or is it you?
 - In our darkness and pain it seems true to us that our God has failed us or abandoned us. Nothing could be further than the truth: Dt 31:8 NLT -- Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.
- These lies plunge us into the darkness of the Pit, distancing us from our heavenly Father's light and life. They are perpetrated by the Father of Lies. (John 8:44)
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Lord, please help me identify any disappointments that are impacting my relationship with You:

What doubts have plagued me in this place of pain and confusion?

What lies am I believing that are separating me from You and Your truth?

- Insights:

B. DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD

- While this psalm ends without the circumstances being resolved, it does show us two alternatives for dealing with disappointment in our relationship with God.
- Our choices are being 1) Disappointed IN God or 2) Disappointed WITH God. (Brad Hambrick)
- When we are disappointed IN God, we land in the Pit and are “brought down to the dust.” (v. 25) We get stuck in our feelings and cut off from our one true Hope.
- We find in this psalm that we are free to process our disappointment WITH God. He gives us permission to come to Him with honesty about our feelings and questions.
- The battles are different in our day but, like the psalmist, they are full of heartache. We are Waiting On God to keep His Word and to act in our behalf.
- Psalm 44 (and other psalms of lament) gives us words to bring to God that can be raw and unfiltered without the need to be presentable or figure things out first.
- Our hard questions and our volatile emotions are welcome in God’s throne room: Heb 4:15-16 AMP – We do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One Who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning.¹⁶ Let us then fearlessly *and* confidently *and* boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God’s unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].
- Sometimes we need to ask forgiveness when negativity has led us into sin.
- Sometimes our emotions are not wrong just hard. That’s when we need to ask for God’s comfort and counsel instead.
- Working through our disappointments WITH God can be awkward and slow. It’s hard to connect when we feel mad or disappointed toward Him.
- We must remember that greater than our need for answers is our need for relationship and communion with the Lord. He alone is the source of perfect love.
- God knows everything about us. In His presence we are safe to explore our outward emotions and those that lie beneath the surface without His rebuke: Psalm 139:1,3 -- O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.... You...are acquainted with all my ways.
- Let’s let HS probe beneath our self-protective emotions like anger, asking Him to expose and help negotiate our more vulnerable feelings like fear, grief or shame: Isaiah 61:3 NLT -- ...He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair.
- Doing the hard work of processing our disappointment WITH God produces:
 - Deeper relationship: Job 42:5 MSG -- I admit I once lived by rumors of you; now I have it all firsthand—from my own eyes and ears!
 - Greater trust: Ps 56:3-4 NLT -- When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
 - Hope when future hardships come: Ps 42:5 NLT -- I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!
- Let’s bring our disappointment to the Lord to receive His truth and comfort. As we wait on Him, we will see that He always keeps His covenant of love and faithfulness.
- Insights:

C. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING

- The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

- PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse or principle stood out to you this week? Write it below taking some time to review it often. Be still in God's presence, alert for new insights. Record them here.

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

Prayerfully consider the Listening Exercises from this lesson. Ask the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal any specific faith steps He is calling you to take. Write down your insights.