

Fear of Disappointment Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Describe one time this week when you told somebody “Thank you.”
2. Would you rather spend your birthday with two friends or twenty friends?

Read the following passage: Luke 1:5-20.

In the ancient world, having children was a big deal. Psalm 127 states that, “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.” Zechariah’s and Elizabeth’s inability to have children was a deeply painful, and likely defining, feature of their lives. They surely asked all the questions we would ask: “What’s wrong with us? Are we cursed? Did we do something wrong? Why won’t God help us?” Disappointment can be crushing. And because of past disappointments, sometimes we’re afraid to hope. But God met Zechariah and Elizabeth when they least expected it. God heard their prayers all along, and he had good plans for them. All of us will experience disappointment in this life, but, because of God’s goodness, we can take the risk to hope again.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. How has disappointment impacted your life? Are there areas of your life in which you are afraid to hope? Explain.
2. Why is hope important? What is the ultimate hope for followers of Jesus? Do you live with a sense of hope? Explain.
3. Read Deuteronomy 8:2-5. How might God use delays to expose what is in our hearts? How can delays lead to transformation?
4. One of the reasons we find delays and disappointments to be so painful is our assumption that the primary goal of this life is our happiness. God’s goal for us in this life, however, is not primarily that we would be happy, but that we would know him, which will lead to our supreme happiness in the next life. (See, for example, Philippians 3:7-11.) How might this change of perspective impact how we process delays and disappointments?
5. When Jesus’ friend Lazarus was ill, Jesus created a delay so that more people would see God’s glory. (See John 11:1-4; 12:9-11.) How might God use the painful experiences in our lives to help other people see the glory of God?

6. What are some ways we might be the cause of delays in our lives?
7. Sometimes the delays in our lives are painful because we aren't living for a purpose that goes beyond our individual lives. How can active participation in the church help us overcome our tendency to focus primarily on ourselves?

Pray