SPIRITUAL
JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS

OPEN DOOR – UNRESOLVED DISAPPOINTMENT
Hope deferred also known as the second grief, refers to unresolved disappointment in our lives. Disappointment is guaranteed, if we don’t deal with it, it will stop us from reaching our full potential in Christ.

Webster’s Dictionary defines disappointment as ‘when expectations fail to be met producing anger, frustration, sadness, and discouragement

We don’t always recognize the loss of our hopes, dreams, and expectations as a source of grief. We also don’t recognise our personal regrets as a source of grief.

If we are not released in our hearts to deal effectively with disappointment, then it will lead us into depression and despair and ultimately defeat!

IDENTIFYING THE SOURCE
• Parents disappoint us. We grieve for what did happen that shouldn’t have happened and for what didn’t happen that should have happened.
• Academic dreams. Growing up we all had dreams for our lives. Worked hard at school hoped to go to University not being able to go because of lack of finance.
• Career Aspirations. We may have had a particular career in mind for ourselves and parents force us to follow a career that they think would best.
• Disappointment in marriage – abuse, violence, adultery. These things kill off all the hopes and dreams that the marriage would be made in heaven.
• Death of dreams for our children. Our expectations for our children are good education, a job, security, a life partner – they choose to leave home, get into drugs, fall pregnant.
• Disappointment in those you have poured your life into. Moses and the Israelites. Moses, founding Pastor of the First Church of the Critical and the Ungrateful!
• Disappointment in the family. Joseph and his brothers.
• Our situation in Zimbabwe. Families are scattered. Basic human rights (needs) are not met – power, clean water, jobs, finances, injustice, farms taken, and economic decline.
• Like Peter, have we disappointed ourselves? He denied his Lord three times.
• Are we disappointed with God?

THE EFFECTS OF UNRESOLVED HOPE DEFERRED
Proverbs 13:12: ‘Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life.’ Unresolved disappointment does not allow us to hope, we cannot see an end to our pain. The symptoms of unresolved disappointment in our lives are very similar to those of depression.

Psalm 31:9-10. Weariness, physical weakness, tired.


Short-sightedness can often be traced back to deep unresolved disappointments and regrets.

The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale which measures the impact of major life events on one’s health includes forty one events that trigger significant stress. Every event is assigned a number of points, and when the sum of those points hits 150 or more the risk of illness goes up dramatically. Note – the top ten events except for marriage and marital reconciliation are losses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Event</th>
<th>Stress Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Death of a spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Marital Separation</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Imprisonment</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Death of a close family member</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Personal Injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Marriage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Dismissal from work</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Marital reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Retirement</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Isaiah 43:18-19. ‘Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past, see I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness.’ All of us must face and deal with disappointment. No person alive has everything happen in life the way they want or in the way they expect. Feeling disappointed is normal – but we must know what to do with that feeling, or it will move into something more serious.

Philippians 3:13-14 Paul says much the same as Isaiah ‘but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.’ For Paul the most important thing was to let go of what lay behind (the past) and press toward what was ahead. We are letting go of the causes for our disappointment pressing toward what God has for us. We get a new vision, a plan, an idea, a fresh outlook, a new mind-set and we change our focus. We decide to go on – the decision rests with us!

2 Corinthians 7:10 (Amplified) ‘for Godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret; but worldly grief the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world ends in death.’
We tend to shut down the pain of disappointment and shattered hopes and plans and dreams. According to this scripture we should be inviting the Lord to direct our pain so in Him we can come to a place of acceptance and be ready to move on in life.

We can move through our loss and come out on the other side. The choice is ours. The decision to move forward does not necessarily mean that the emotional pain will go away but it will subside in time. God wants to take us through our losses not around them.

Chinese Proverb: You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair.

CLOSE THE DOOR
- Make a list of the major disappointments and losses you have experienced from childhood to date.
- Record next to each item how you felt at the time.
- Record the names of those who have contributed to your grief and loss in anyway.
- Face the fact that these disappointments are real, that they hold you in bondage and YOU have allowed them to control you.
- Humble yourself and repent.
- Confess – don’t excuse, rationalize, or blame circumstances or other people.
- Forgive those who have hurt, offended, or disappointed you. Including yourself!
- Ask the Lord to forgive you and receive His grace and forgiveness by faith not by feelings.
- Get whatever help you need to get back on track. Sooner not later! Those losses that can be redeemed set yourself an action plan to pick up the dream again and make it happen. Those that cannot be redeemed, make the choice to leave them at the Cross in the past where they belong.

Lord, when I have lost hope because my plans have come to nothing, help me to remember that Your love is greater, is always greater than my disappointments and that Your plans are always better than my dreams. Amen

OPEN DOOR – TAKING AND HOLDING ONTO OFFENCE
Many people are unable to function properly in God’s plans and purposes for them because of wounds, inner hurts, and offences in their lives. We humans are sensitive, and being on the receiving end of a deliberate or accidental offence and consequently feeling hurt inside can be a great problem for us all at some time. The devil is subtle and cunning, he delights in deception. When we fall into the trap of offence, we give him licence to have his way in our lives. Most of us will have days when we will have the opportunity to take offence. The choice is yours and if you are smart you will not take offence no matter how justifiable it is for you to do just that.
THE CONDITION OF THE HEART
Very often offences in our lives remain hidden behind a cloak of pride. Pride can hold us back in many ways:

- Pride comes before a fall. Proverbs 16:18.
- Pride keeps you from admitting your true heart condition and will eventually lead to disgrace. Proverbs 11:2.
- Pride keeps you from dealing with the truth. We remain in a self-made prison of bad feelings. Proverbs 29:23.
- Pride distorts your vision; you never change when you think everything is fine.
- Pride hardens your heart; it keeps you from the change of heart – repentance – that sets you free. Refusal to turn away will result in punishment. Proverbs 16:5.
- Pride produces a victim mentality. ‘I was mistreated and misjudged; so I am justified in my behaviour.’ This will result in withholding forgiveness.

There are two groups of offended people – those who have genuinely been mistreated, and those who think they have been mistreated but in fact have not. The question is: If we have been genuinely mistreated, do we have the right to be offended? Consider the story of Joseph in Genesis Chapters 37 to 48.

WHERE THERE’S A ROOT THERE WILL BE FRUIT
Unresolved offence in our lives will produce fruit:
Hurt / Anger / Outrage / Judgemental / Jealousy / Envy / Critical Resentment / Strife / Bitterness / Hatred

WALLS OF PROTECTION
In the Old Testament we read about the cities being fortified, surrounded by walls to keep enemies out and the people safely inside. Hurt, offended people build strong walls around themselves in an effort to protect their hearts from further hurt.

- The truth is when we build walls around ourselves we are creating a prison which holds us bound and we will not be able to relate to others in a deep way. If we cannot risk being hurt, we cannot give unconditional love.
- Holding onto an offence gives one a false sense of self-protection. It keeps us from seeing our own character flaws because the blame is deferred to another. The truth is only God can protect us and only God can judge those who hurt us. 1 Samuel 17:47. Actually, these walls are no protection from the enemy. He goes straight through them.

OFFENDED BY THE FATHER FIGURE
It is bad enough to be betrayed and offended by brother and sisters, but to be betrayed, rejected, and offended by a father is much more painful. Father refers not only to a biological father but to any authority figure that God puts over us. Those people we expect to love, teach, care for, and nurture us. A biblical example of this is the relationship between King Saul and David. 1 Samuel Chapters 16-31
The truth is that like Saul, many leaders in our homes, corporations and churches are more concerned with their goals than with their offspring. These leaders see people as resources to serve their vision. How we react to such people and what they have done to us depends on us.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?
Feeling hurt is not wrong, we were created with feelings. Mark 3.5 describes an occasion when the Lord Jesus Himself ‘looked around at them with anger, grieved by their hardness of heart’. We are only human and we are part of a fallen world. So whilst we do not welcome getting hurt, it is unrealistic not to expect it at some time. How though are we meant to react? Jesus sets us an example to follow in 1 Peter 2:23.

- The Bible teaches forgiveness: 1 Corinthians 15:3.
- The Bible teaches laying down our rights. We are called to build not destroy, to edify not tear down. So, if we offend others, we must carefully consider laying that part of our lives down whether we are right or wrong so as not to be a stumbling block to another. 1 Corinthians 8:9.
- The Bible teaches reconciliation. Matthew 5:21-24. In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus illustrates the severity of holding anger or bitter offence. Not dealing with anger can lead to hatred. Not dealing with hatred would put them in danger of hell. Jesus exhorts us to reconcile, to be willing to humble ourselves and apologise even if the offence is not our fault. It takes maturity to walk in humility in order to bring reconciliation.

WHEN THE TRUTH CAUSES OFFENCE
Jesus did not compromise the truth in order to keep people from being offended. It’s the truth that sets us free, so the truth must be told as it is according to the Word of God. Jesus offended the Pharisees. Matthew 15:12. Jesus offended those in His own hometown. Matthew 13: 55-57. Jesus offended His own family members. Mark 3:21, 31-35. He offended His Disciples. John 6:60-66. Jesus’ close friends Mary and Martha must have been a little offended when Jesus didn’t come immediately He heard Lazarus was sick. John 11: 1-6. Interestingly, the Bible does not say that Jesus became upset or reacted in any way when people decided they didn’t like the truth and turned away from Him.

When Pastor says something that causes us offence, we would do well to check his statement out against the Word of God. We would do well to check our heart attitude, why was I offended? It may well be a case of ‘if the cap fits wear it. ‘If we are outside of God’s Word instead of taking offence we need to repent!
CLOSE THE DOOR

- Using the example of Jesus mentioned in 1 Peter 2:23 consider and write down all the offences you have held onto and that still hurt your heart.
- Write down how those offences made you feel.
- List the names of those who offended you.
- Go to Father in prayer choose to separate yourself from each of those offences, exchange the unhealthy feelings for healthy feelings and release those who have offended you into the freedom of your forgiveness.
- Ask Father to forgive you for holding onto these offences and to help you to choose not to be easily offended. Receive His forgiveness in your heart.

YOUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY DEPENDS ON YOUR WILLINGNESS TO FACE, FORGIVE AND FORGET PAST OFFENCES.