

## HOW TO DEAL WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

## 2 SAMUEL 7

Has God ever said no to one of your dreams? Consider Bob. Bob dreamed of being an outstanding football coach. His career took off quickly and at a very young age he was an assistant coach at a college football program. He dreamed of being the head coach and was thought of by many as next in line for that job. Then Bob's situation changed swiftly and radically. His coaching job at that school came to an end and he fought off feelings of bitter disappointment. Bob refused to become bitter against God and turn away from following Him. He went on to get a doctoral degree and become the dean of the university where he had once coached. In terms of influence, Bob's shadow will one day fall over a far wider territory and have far greater impact that it ever would have had if he'd remained a football coach. Has God ever said no to one of your dreams? Consider Ed and Georgia. They spent several years equipping themselves and raising financial support to do mission work in Latin America. Once in country, Georgia developed a serious health condition that required them to return to the United States. They returned crushed and brokenhearted – their dream in ruins. Then Ed went off to seminary and eventually became the head of a missions department at a Christian university. God brought them back from the mission field so He would use them to train missionaries for work all over the world.

Has God ever said no to one of your dreams? I'm not talking about a foolish dream, a sinful dream or a selfish dream. God should say no to those kinds of dreams for your own good! No, I'm thinking instead of a God-honoring dream, a great dream or a godly dream of something you wanted to do for God or some way in which you wanted God to use you. I'm fascinated by the fact that God said no to one of David's dreams. David's dream was a great and a godly dream. It was most certainly a God-honoring dream; nevertheless, God said no to it. David's story provides a life lesson on a reality we all deal with sooner or later: disappointment. How do you react when God says no? I'm also personally challenged by how David reacted when God said no.

We're discerning some important life lessons through the lens of one of the great characters found in the Bible: David. Now, we've been jumping around a bit chronologically as we consider David's life story in the Scripture. Here's the scene for today's message. King Saul, the man who had tried to kill David for several years, had himself been killed in battle. David no longer had to live the life of a fugitive hiding out in caves. At the age of 30, David was crowned king of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. There continued to be battles for several years with one of Saul's surviving sons, Ish-Bosheth, as to who would rule as king over the other eleven tribes; in other words, over all of Israel. Then, Ish-Bosheth was murdered. Finally, at the age of 37, David became king of all Israel just as God had promised many years earlier.

This was a great time in David's life! God had enabled David to defeat all of his enemies. God had helped David make the city of Jerusalem the new capital of

the nation of Israel. David built a beautiful palace for himself there. He also moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark was an ornate, beautiful box constructed under Moses' direction hundreds of years earlier when the people of Israel left slavery in Egypt for freedom in the Promised Land of Canaan. The Ark had been placed in the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle – that tent like structure where God Himself was visibly present among the people of Israel and where they offered worship up to God. The Ark was a symbol of God's presence and of His promise to be faithful to His people. Well, that brings us to our text for today. Here we read about David's dream. (2 Samuel 7)

David's dream was to build a grand and glorious temple to honor God. He wanted the people of Israel to worship God appropriately. Was that a bad dream? Was it a wrong dream? Absolutely not! On the contrary, it was a godly, great dream. When Solomon, David's son and successor to the throne, actually built and dedicated the temple that his father, David, had so much wanted to build, he makes this interesting observation, "...My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD told him, 'You wanted to build the Temple to honor my name. Your intention is good, but you are not the one to do it. One of your own sons will build the Temple to honor me.'"" (2 Chr 6:7-9 NLT) So, even God thought David's dream was worthwhile and wonderful, but He still said no to David. I believe this story from David's life helps us to come to grips with disappointment in life, generally, but also, the disappointment we experience, specifically, when God says no to our dreams – even godly, good dreams. Let's think, first of all, about ...

### **WHAT'S REVEALED WHEN GOD SAYS NO.**

First, when God says no you're reminded that He's sovereign. David's close friend and prophet of the Lord, Nathan, thought that David's dream was good and great, too. But then Nathan heard directly from the Lord. Despite David's good intentions, God's answer was no. God's words through Nathan remind David that it was God who took David from the pasture tending sheep to the throne of Israel. It was God who had enabled David to defeat all of his enemies. It was God who was going to establish David's dynasty forever. In other words, God is sovereign. It's as if God said, "David, I chose you first. I protected you, established you and preserved you. I'm in control. Your dream of building me a temple is well-intentioned, but it's not part of My plan or purpose for you."

It's important to remember when God says no to one of your dreams and you feel disappointment that He is sovereign. God has a plan and purpose for the entire universe and for every human life that has, is or will ever exist. God is in absolute and loving control of everything. I don't fully grasp that, but I try to hold on to it by faith. What was true of David is also true of you. God chose you before you ever chose Him. God protects, establishes and preserves your life. Now, I like the truth of God's sovereignty when it means good things for me. But I resist God's sovereignty when God's plan or purpose involves disappointment

for me or when God says no to one of my dreams. I still struggle with what it means for God to be sovereign. I probably always will this side of Heaven! David's dream of building God a temple – however noble, worthy and godly – was not God's plan. Your dreams and my dreams – however wonderful – are not necessarily God's plan. And God doesn't run His universe on the basis of anyone's dreams, hopes or wishes, but instead upon His all-knowing, perfect and sovereign will. Your willingness and mine to surrender and submit to God's sovereignty is one of the great faith challenges we're going to face in this life. It means, despite our disappointment, really trusting that God knows best.

Second, when God says no He doesn't always tell you why. Nowhere in our text today does God give David a reason why He doesn't want David to build Him a temple. I suggest that sometimes God's response to our "why" questions – the disappointment we feel when He says no - sounds a bit like a parent who says to his or her kid, "Because I said so." We ask, "God, why?" He says, "Because I said so!" Now, it's true that there's a kind of partial answer given elsewhere as to why David wasn't able to build the temple. The scene is when David is an old man nearing death. "David rose to his feet and said: 'My brothers and my people! It was my desire to build a temple where the Ark of the LORD's Covenant, God's footstool, could rest permanently. I made the necessary preparations for building it, but God said to me, "You must not build a temple to honor my name, for you are a warrior and have shed much blood.'"" (1 Chr 28:2-3 NLT) Now, I must admit, if that's supposed to be an explanation, it raises some questions in my mind. Did David being a warrior somehow disqualify him from building a temple to God's honor and glory? If so, why? After all, God was the one who told David to go out and fight these battles and kill these enemies. God was the one who empowered and enabled David to become a great military leader and defeat Israel's enemies. No, I just don't believe that David being a warrior somehow disqualified him from building the temple.

Instead, it leads us to a third observation. When God says no to a good and godly dream, it's because His calling and will for your life is different than the one you have envisioned for yourself. God has gifted you in unique ways. He has a plan and purpose for your life – a calling, a role, a mission for you to fulfill. It has nothing to do with how spiritual you are or how worthy you happen to be. In fact, if worth or spirituality were the criteria for building the temple, David would have been a better choice than his son, Solomon. Solomon was a great man, but he was not his father's equal - particularly when it came to a personal relationship with God. God never called Solomon a man after His own heart! No, the point is this. God has different roles for His children. David's role was to be a great general and to establish the kingdom of Israel. Solomon's role was to build up and solidify Israel as a great nation in a peaceful way. And, as part of that, Solomon was the one God wanted to construct the temple. The secret to a truly meaningful life following Jesus is not getting your own dreams fulfilled as precious as they may be to you, but instead finding the role, the calling or the mission God has for you in life and faithfully fulfilling it. When God says no and

you feel inevitably disappointed, it's a moment in your life when you answer the all important question, "Who's in charge here?"

Here's a fourth insight. When God says no it's because His ultimate plan for you is always greater than your own dreams. Did you notice that at the same time God was saying no to David's dream of building Him a house, the Lord was promising to build up David's "house", in other words, his royal dynasty? There it is in v. 16, "Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever." (2 Sam 7:16 NLT) Wow...! I doubt if David himself fully understood what God was promising him there. He just probably thought the Davidic dynasty would be around for a really long time. But we know now that the ultimate fulfillment of this promise is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of David, exercising dominion, majesty and rule over the entire universe forever. Do you remember what the angel said to Mary about Jesus just before His birth? "He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" (Lk 1:32-33 NLT) What's the point? God's plan for David completely dwarfed David's dream for himself. If that was true of David, why can't it also be true of you?

Your dreams – no matter how good and godly – are puny and insignificant when compared with God's plan and purpose for your life. Very few of God's children live life without experiencing some shattered dreams. But God's plan and purpose for your life is greater, grander and better than even the best, noblest and most godly dreams you've dreamed for your own life. One woman back in the 1930s – I don't know her name – discovered in her early married life that she and her husband couldn't have children. One of her biggest and most cherished dreams in life was all about having babies and children. But, early in her marriage, she had surgery which made getting pregnant impossible. She was devastated and in anguish. World War 2 broke out and her husband went off to war. She happened to see an ad in the newspaper for someone to take care of a baby while the mother went to the hospital. It turned out that the mother was never able to raise her own child, and this childless mother raised that little girl as her own. Taking in one little baby led to another and another and another. Sometimes it was just for a weekend or even a day. But over the years, over a hundred children came under this woman's care. Some children caused her and others great emotional pain. Others turned out remarkably well. But that woman discovered that God's plan for her life dwarfed her dream for herself.

Trust God. Let Him open and close the right doors. Rest in His will for your life. God doesn't treat you any differently than He treated David. In our remaining moments today, let me draw your attention to how David responded when God said no. It's one thing to perceive what's revealed when God says no. But, in addition, I believe David is a fine example of ...

## **HOW TO RESPOND WHEN GOD SAYS NO.**

First, like David, you can respond with praise. Look again at our text, “How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you. We have never even heard of another God like you! What other nation on earth is like your people Israel? What other nation, O God, have you redeemed from slavery to be your own people? You made a great name for yourself when you redeemed your people from Egypt. You performed awesome miracles and drove out the nations and gods that stood in their way. You made Israel your very own people forever, and you, O LORD, became their God.” (2 Sam 7:22-24 NLT) What is that? Praise! I have to believe that God’s refusal to let David build Him the temple must have stung David just a bit. But David chooses to praise God anyway. David reminds himself of God’s greatness and goodness. In the same way, when God does say no to you in some way, remind yourself that God is good, great and sovereign nonetheless. Remind yourself of what God has done for you and what He promises to do for you in the future. God is still on His throne. He still loves you. He still promises to work everything together for good in your life. When God says no and you’re disappointed, do you still choose to praise Him?

Second, like David, you can respond with humility. We see that clearly in our text today. “Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and prayed, ‘Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And now, Sovereign LORD, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving your servant a lasting dynasty! Do you deal with everyone this way, O Sovereign LORD? What more can I say to you? You know what your servant is really like, Sovereign LORD.’” (2 Sam 7:18-20 NLT) You get the sense that words failed David when he started to review all that God had done for him and promised to him for the future. He recognized that he didn’t deserve God’s blessing. Then, David puts his finger on why God pours out His blessing on anyone at anytime. “Because of your promise and according to your will, you have done all these great things and have made them known to your servant.” (2 Sam 7:21 NLT) It takes humility to admit that God knows better than you do. It takes humility to believe God has a better plan for you than your own dream for yourself. It takes humility to recognize that you’re not called to do everything you think you should do in life but instead to do only what God wants you to do. When God says no and you’re disappointed, are you still humble before Him?

Third, like David, you can respond with contentment. Instead of grumbling and complaining about the death of his dream to build a temple for God, David chooses to focus on what God does want him to do. David reflects on all God’s great blessings that still belong to Him – His relationship with God, the wonderful way God brought him to the throne of Israel and God’s promises for the future. No, David didn’t build the temple. God said no to his dream. But the Bible reveals that David didn’t sit down in despair and have a good pout about it either. Instead, he made all the blueprints for the temple, gathered all the materials together for its construction and explained his dream carefully to his son, Solomon, before he died. Contentment is a deliberate choice that you make. You remember what you have left. You remember and thank God for everything

He has said yes to in your life. When God says no and you're disappointed, can you still be content? Praise, humility and contentment are all – at the end of the day – expressions of trust. I believe that's one major reason God so highly regarded David and called him a man after God's own heart. Through it all and in it all, David continued to put his trust in God. When God says no and you're disappointed, will you continue to trust in Him?

In 1931, Matsu Crawford and her husband were serving as missionaries in Japan. Matsu helped at a home for girls from poor families. They were being trained in the Christian way of life along with music, Bible study, English language classes, and in practical skills like cooking, sewing, and embroidery. Some of the girls, after leaving the school, continued their education to become teachers. A few returned to this home for girls as staff members. One such girl was Miyoko San. When she returned to the school, she became head of the music department. One day she came to Matsu, her missionary friend, very distraught. When she was ten years old, her parents had betrothed her to a neighbor's son back in the remote mountains of the province where she came from. Miyoko had forgotten all about it, but the parents and the boy had not. Her father had called the day before to inform her that the young man would expect to claim his bride when school was out in July. Miyoko was shocked, but Matsu's was just plain mad. "It's an outrage! Surely you can refuse to have any part in their plans for you," Matsu said to Miyoko. "Why should you be married to an illiterate man who's not even a Christian and will not know how to treat a wife like you?" But when Miyoko's wedding day arrived, it was clear that she'd definitely fallen in love. Later, she wrote to Matsu about her marriage:

"My husband is helpful, considerate, and appreciative. From the first day, he knew that I had been given opportunities denied to him. He asked me to teach him all that I had learned here at the school. I began to teach him English. We have studied the Bible together; he is now a believer in Christ as Lord. Together we have started a church in our house. Now there is a small group of believers who study with us. Knowing how much I would miss my music, he somehow saved enough money to buy an organ for me. It was his wedding present to me. It is the first organ seen or heard in our village. Now I am teaching the children in our village to love music. Some of them are even learning to play the organ."

Matsu suddenly realized that her outrage and disappointment had been foolish. God's plan for Miyoko had been far better and greater than Matsu's dream for Miyoko. Through this arranged marriage, God's message of salvation was being proclaimed in the remote mountains of Japan by one of the village's own and God was building His Church there through Miyoko and her husband.

Has God ever said no to one of your dreams? When disappointment comes, you can learn a lesson from David. Praise God. Be humble before Him. Choose to be content. Above all, trust. His plans for you are greater than your dreams for yourself.