

How do you deal with brothers and sisters who disappoint you?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

1 Corinthians was written to urban people. The Corinth of that day was equivalent to New York, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong today. It was an international metropolis and a very famous commercial port. Although Corinth was rich in material resources and had a prosperous business, its social atmosphere was very poor, known for being immoral. Their culture encouraged people to indulge in lust, and if people wanted to indulge in lust, they would go there.

The social atmosphere invaded the church. Corinth was recognized as a problematic church. There were factions and disunity among the church, and people went to court to discuss disputes. Some people had promiscuous relationships, committed adultery, and had chaotic marital relationships. Some people abused their freedom and caused others to fall. Some people abused their gifts and caused chaos in the meetings. The church in Corinth was a great disappointment to Paul. Paul had single-handedly led them to believe in the Lord (Paul was the founder of the Corinthian church), but now they were so corrupt in morality and discipline that, when Paul went to confront them, they rejected him and questioned his authority. Paul was deeply hurt.

Although Paul was very disappointed with these brothers and sisters, his attitude was very good and is worthy of our learning. This passage shows us that when we face Christians who disappoint us, we need to look at them from three perspectives.

1. Look at his status in Christ

In v.2 Paul calls them "those who have been sanctified in Jesus Christ and are called to be saints." What does it mean to be holy? Holiness means to be set apart and used by the Lord. Saints are those who are set apart as belonging to God. Although Paul was their spiritual father, they did not belong to Paul.

Many times, you react so strongly to a brother or sister who disappoints you because you think you own him or her. If you treat him or her well, he or she will also treat you well. If he or she treats you badly, it is as if he or she owes you something. You may have a strong reaction because you feel that he has hurt your self-esteem more than you feel that he has hurt God's heart and hurt himself. In fact, many times, this reaction is very self-centered.

You have to remember: he does not belong to you. He belongs to God. Your responsibility is

to be good to him. Whether he is good to you or not is none of your business. He must give an account to God, and God will deal with him. This perspective will help you to be more open-minded toward Christians who disappoint you.

2. Look at his good side

When a brother or sister disappoints us, it is easy for us to focus on that person's problems. When we see him or her, we only see the bad things about him or her, and see him or her as a problem, forgetting God's original work in him or her. Not so with Paul! Paul did not intentionally ignore the problem, but rather focused on what God had already accomplished in them. Therefore, he could express his gratitude to them with all his heart. (See v.4-7)

When you encounter Christians who disappoint you, what do you see in them? Will you, like Paul, still see the good in them? How you look at people is very important. The more faults you see in a person, the worse you will treat him; the more strengths you see in him, the better you will treat him. How you view him determines his relationship with you and also determines his performance.

In the long run, it is not the knowledge and training you teach that can change this person, but your sincere support for him that can help him change. Has anyone ever let you down? Never lose your innocent heart towards people because of this, just believe in him and have high hopes for him. Sooner or later he will change.

3. Look at his future

How did Paul view these disappointed Corinthians? "He will strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (v.8) Paul believed that when the Lord comes again, these brothers and sisters who seem weak and have many problems will be changed by God and become perfect. Paul saw their future in Christ, so he did not give up on them.

Although the Christian who disappoints you may seem to have not changed at all now, this is only temporary. Please step beyond the present and look at him from an eternal perspective. God is not bound by time; He sees the end from the beginning; the whole picture is instantly before His eyes. What God sees is not him as he is now, but the perfect being that he will be

when the Lord comes again, and He continues to shape him today according to the perfect being in His mind. Therefore, no matter how bad he is now, the Lord still has hope in him and will not give up on him, because He knows that his weakness and limitation are only temporary. God sees his future, so God always has hope for him. We need this kind of vision.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever met (or are you currently meeting) a Christian who has disappointed you? How did he disappoint you? How can the above three perspectives on people help you face him?
2. Among the three perspectives of looking at people mentioned above, which one do you need to strengthen the most? How to strengthen this vision?