

OCTOBER 2013



TODAY IN THE **Word**

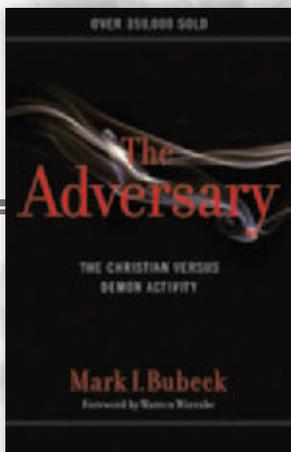
A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

Revelation 21:4



Disappointment with God



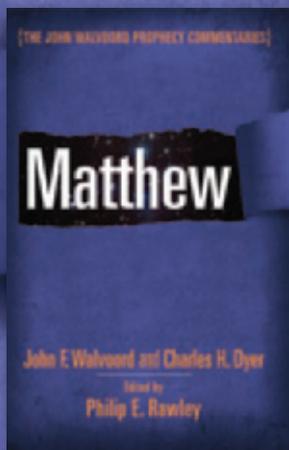
The Adversary

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Matthew

THE JOHN WALVOORD
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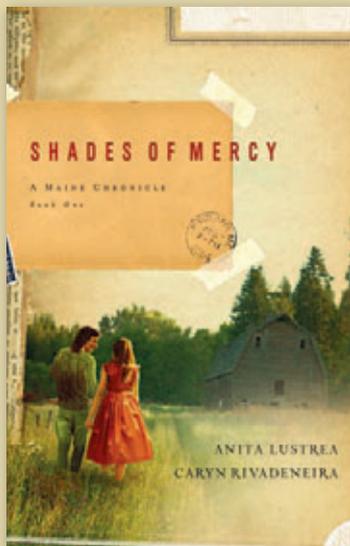
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It's 1954 and the far Northwoods of Maine are about to change. Mercy Millar is ready for the world to embrace her as the young woman she is—as well as embrace the forbidden love she feels for Mick, a Maliseet boy who works on her father's farm. When racial tensions escalate and Mick is thrown in jail under suspicion of murder, Mercy nearly loses all hope—in love, in her father, and in God himself.

river
north

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TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

The Hope of Heaven



The apostle Paul was familiar with suffering, disappointment, and pain. He was beaten, stoned, imprisoned—even shipwrecked three times (2 Cor. 11:25). What provided him with perspective

in the midst of his grief? Romans 8:18 suggests that the promise of heaven gave Paul immense hope, allowing him to face whatever came his way. He wrote, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Yet I find that many believers today don’t know enough about our eternal home to help take their eyes off today’s troubles. So what does the Bible say eternity will be like? One of my favorite descriptions is found in Revelation 21:1–5 where John describes four characteristics of this place where believers will dwell with God.

First, Scripture calls this the new heaven and the new earth (see Rev. 21:1). Verse 5 says, “And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’” God loves and cares about His creation, which He called “good” (Gen. 1:31). He will completely redeem and transform it, just as He loves His children and will complete our salvation to conform us to the image of His Son (see Rom. 8:18–23).

Second, our eternal dwelling will be more beautiful and glorious than anything we have ever seen. In Revelation 21:2,

John says, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” What a challenge it must have been for John to describe this vision! He compares this heavenly city to a woman on her wedding day, carefully and lovingly prepared for her groom.

Third, John tells us that the new heaven and new earth will be free from the effects of sin: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain” (Rev. 21:4). In our eternal home, there will be no sin. This means we will experience life without the presence of grief, disappointment, and pain.

John gives one more characteristic, and this is the best of all: God will dwell with man forever. Revelation 21:3 says, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them.” God has always had a desire to be with humanity, but ever since the Fall, sin caused a separation. Throughout history, God demonstrated His desire to be with His people in the tabernacle, in the temple, and in Jesus Christ. In heaven, we will finally experience the culmination of God’s desire.

Friends, we have hope because we know where our future will be. Today’s troubles will not last forever. Someday God will replace our pain with the gift of His presence and glory, and we will experience eternity with Him in a beautiful new place void of sin and its effects.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



The Disappointment of Christ

Did Jesus experience disappointment? Since He is our high priest who is able to “empathize with our weakness” and has been “tempted in every way, just as we are,” one would think that the answer to this question must be yes (Heb. 4:15). Certainly in some passages of Scripture Jesus expresses Himself in a way that seems to correspond with what we call disappointment.

After learning that His disciples had failed to help a man who brought his demonized son to them, Jesus said: “You unbelieving and perverse generation . . . how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?” (Luke 9:41). It is hard to tell from the context whether this remark was addressed to Jesus’ disciples or to the boy’s father, but the implication of the statement is hard to miss. Things should have been different.

On the night of His betrayal, deeply troubled at the prospect of His suffering, Jesus asked the disciples to watch with Him in prayer. According to Mark 14:37, “Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon,’ he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?’”

Most striking of all was Jesus’ cry from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). Certainly these words accurately express the anguish Jesus felt at this moment. But they have an even greater significance. By quoting the first verse of Psalm 22, which described the suffering of Israel’s Messiah, Jesus identified Himself as the one predicted in these verses. By taking these words on His lips, Jesus also affirmed His confidence in the outcome of His suffering. Psalm 22 begins with the “cry of dereliction,” but concludes with a shout of victory (Ps. 22:22, 24).

This helps us to understand the difference between Jesus’ experience of disappointment and our own. We are disappointed when we expect one thing and get something else. Jesus was fully aware that His disciples would fail in the garden. The Scriptures foretold it and He had predicted it (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27). He knew the hearts of the multitude and was not shocked by their refusal to believe in Him (John 2:24). He was grieved at their hardness of heart (Mark 3:5). But He was not surprised.

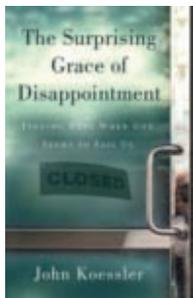
For Further Study

To learn more about the implications of Christ’s human nature read *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* by Bruce A. Ware (Crossway).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Heather Moffitt

Disappointed Christians and a Good God: An interview with John Koessler



John Koessler's recent book, *The Surprising Grace of Disappointment: Finding Hope When God Seems to Fail Us*, addresses the issue that many people struggle with: Why doesn't God

always seem helpful, caring, and good? How do we make sense of the disappointments, frustrations, and pain in life? *Today in the Word* wanted to share his thoughts on these relevant questions. In addition to his work as contributing editor for *Today in the Word*, Koessler serves as the chair of the Pastoral Studies department at Moody Bible Institute.

Heather Moffitt: This book is both pastoral and theological. What drew you to this topic? Was it from pastoral experience, from teaching Bible college students, or from your own personal experience with disappointment?

John Koessler: I suppose all of the above. Primarily I wrote the book as a way of dealing with my own sense of disappointment in a number of areas of life. The more I thought about the topic, the more I realized that just about everybody I know is disappointed with something in their lives. If we are honest, even the most spiritual of us will admit that there have

been times when God has not treated us as we expected.

HM: You argue in the book that some of our disappointment with God stems from faulty expectations about God. What do Christians tend to get wrong or misunderstand about our relationship with God that leads to disappointment?

JK: We know that God is completely reliable. He never changes. But sometimes this good theology leads to bad practice. We confuse reliability with predictability. We try to set God's agenda for our lives. When He does not go with our plan, we are frustrated and sometimes angry.

HM: For decades a popular expression of evangelical Christianity was "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Do you think that's a helpful description of the Christian life?

JK: I think it is a true statement, when it comes to someone who belongs to Jesus Christ. The problem is that God's definition of "wonderful" is not always mine. The truly "wonderful" aspect of God's plan for us is reserved for eternity.

HM: You note that Jesus disappoints everyone. I have to say, that's not a very common theme

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

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Disappointment with God

Pinocchio, a wooden boy created by Italian writer Carlo Collodi, expected a great deal from the Field of Wonders. His so-called friends, the Cat and the Fox, told him that a beautiful tree loaded with gold coins would grow overnight if he planted his five gold pieces there. Of course, Pinocchio was terribly disappointed when his dream of becoming quickly and easily rich didn't come true.

Too often Christians view God as a Field of Wonders. We forget that He never promised to make His followers happy or wealthy or successful. We come to Jesus with false expectations, hoping He will fulfill promises He never made. And then, of course, we are terribly disappointed. This month in *Today in the Word*, we'll take a look at our expectations and at our disappointments—with ourselves, with the church, with other people, and with Jesus. And we'll find out what the Bible says about God's cure for disappointment.

Our study of Scripture will remind us once again that our journey through disappointments and heartbreaks leads us to a closer walk with Christ. Every true follower of Christ must travel this slow and often difficult road of Christian maturity, coming to a deeper understanding of His love and grace.

It's a great consolation for all of us to know that we are not alone on this road. Thank you for joining us this month as we learn about the promises, the love, and the surprising grace of God. And thank you for your faithful support of this ministry!

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Trouble in Paradise

While they were shopping, a little boy nagged his mother to buy him a new toy. She responded by paraphrasing Proverbs 27:20: “Death and hell are never full, and the eyes of little boys are never satisfied.” The little boy did not understand what she meant. But he knew enough to understand that the answer was “no.”

Everybody from the smallest child to the oldest adult experiences disappointment. While this feeling is not itself a sin, we can trace its origin to the entrance of sin into human experience. The first human being to experience disappointment was Eve. She was deceived by Satan into thinking that God had withheld something that would give greater satisfaction than all He had already provided in the garden (Gen. 3:1–7). Tragically, the fruit Satan offered our first parents had the opposite effect. It guaranteed that all who followed after them would never be satisfied.

Death and
Destruction are
never satisfied,
and neither are
human eyes.

Proverbs 27:20

This is because sin alienates us from God, who is the ultimate source of all satisfaction (cf. Gen. 3:8–10). Sin distorts the pleasure we take in what God has provided for our enjoyment.

Ordinary and legitimate desire turns to lust. The ordinary use of things God meant to sustain and bless us is twisted until it becomes something shameful (Rom. 1:26–32). The tragedy of sin means that we can never experience true satisfaction apart from the experience of grace.

Perhaps this is why Jesus used images of food and drink when inviting others to receive the grace He offered. The grace and forgiveness that comes to us through Christ is more satisfying than water (John 4:14). Some followed Jesus simply because He fed the multitudes. But Jesus offers something better than mere food (John 6:27).

Apply the Word

This month we will explore disappointment. Those who belong to Christ are not immune—we may even find that God Himself seems to disappoint us. But that is only because we fail to understand God’s intent in our circumstances and are unable to grasp the full scope of His plan. Disappointment becomes a blessing when it drives us into the arms of Christ.

Pray with Us

We start the month by praying for our Donor Communications department: Paul Currie, Joe Forrider, and their part-time assistants. As they pray for the Moody donors, they will be grateful if you include them in your prayers as well.

Disappointment and Envy

In his book *Status Anxiety* author Alain de Botton observes, “Given the vast inequalities we are daily confronted with, the most notable feature of envy may be that we manage not to envy everyone.” Instead, he observes, we reserve most envy for those we feel are like us.

The fundamental question of envy is not merely, “Why him?” or “Why her?” The real question of envy is, “Why not me?” When Cain pouted, God provided an answer to this question. After Cain’s sacrifice was rejected the Lord declared, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it” (Gen. 4:6–7). The missing component in Cain’s offering was faith (Heb. 11:4).

Because envy tends to be secretive, it often feels like a victimless sin.

It is unseen by others and easy to disguise. Yet Cain’s behavior exposes the destructive power of envy. His murder of Abel vividly illustrates the cycle described in James 4:1–3 where murder is the natural outcome of envy. Elsewhere in the New Testament envy is linked with malice, division, and slander (1 Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:3; 1 Peter 2:1).

A heart at peace
gives life to the
body, but envy rots
the bones.

Proverbs 14:30

We envy others when we feel that they get what we deserve. God seems to bless them more than us. Their path appears to be a little smoother. Their burden is a little lighter. It may not be our imagination. God does not promise that everyone’s circumstances will be the same. Whatever the cause of our envy, the root problem is the same as Cain’s. The jealousy we feel indicates a lack of faith. God does not always give us what He gives to others. He does not always give us what we want. But Christ has assured us that He knows what we need (Matt. 6:8).

Apply the Word

Because envy often develops in secret, it must be brought out into the open before it can be dealt with. If you are struggling with envy today, admit it to God. Be explicit in your confession by telling God whom you envy and why. Ask for the grace to trust Him despite your disappointment.

Pray with Us

Donor Communications is one of the departments headed by Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy. Please pray for Bruce and his teams, as they pursue new strategies of reaching our supporters and engaging them in God’s work at Moody.

Disappointment with God's Timing

Pianist Oscar Levant got his revenge on a member of the audience who arrived late by playing in time to her steps as she walked down the center aisle. When she slowed down, he slowed down. When she stopped, he stopped. When she hurried to her seat, he sped up.

It can be irritating when someone is late. We can be especially annoyed when we think that God is late. Abraham and Sarah grew anxious when God seemed to take His time fulfilling an earlier promise that they would have many children (cf. Gen. 15:5). When Sarah still did not have any children after ten years, she took matters into her own hands by making use of a common custom. With his wife's permission, Abraham impregnated Sarah's maid Hagar so that her child would be regarded as his offspring.

Although this decision was acceptable according to the cultural norms of

their day, it demonstrated that Abraham and Sarah failed to grasp the full extent of God's power. They attempted to accomplish through human effort something that God planned to bring about by divine intervention (Gal. 4:22). As a result, Abraham became the father of two lines of descendants. One (Ishmael) was born of human effort. The other (Isaac) was born as a result of God's promise.

Many are the
plans in a person's
heart, but it is the
LORD's purpose that
prevails.

Proverbs 19:21

The apostle Paul later pointed to Abraham's two children to illustrate the way we become children of God. We do not become God's children as a result of human effort but only by receiving His promise of grace through Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:28). All those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ are children of promise like Isaac. Only God can make us His children and He does this through Christ alone. There is no other way to become a part of God's family.

Apply the Word

God may not work according to our timetable, but He is always on time. If you trust Him to make good on His promise of salvation, then why not trust Him to work out His plan for your life? The one who had the power to give Abraham and Sarah a child of promise and who raised Christ from the dead is also working His purpose for you (Rom. 8:28–39).

Pray with Us

Let's pray for field representatives who serve thousands of friends of Moody across the country. Ask God to grant them grace, strength, and endurance as they build connections with Moody donors and offer financial counseling and planning.

Disappointment and Lack of Faith

Lot believed God's warning that Sodom would be destroyed and obeyed His command to leave that city—but with reluctance. Lot's faith won out in the end, but he had trouble trusting that God would provide for him in the mountains (Gen. 19:18). Lot's daughters shared their father's fears. Living in isolation in a cave in the mountains, they could see no way to have a family of their own.

Instead of trusting God to provide, the older daughter persuaded her younger sister that the two of them should get their father drunk and then sleep with him. This sordid plan did not spring from sensual desire, but from a sincere but misguided wish to preserve the family line (Gen. 19:31). Like Abraham, they resorted to human effort instead of relying on God's ability to provide. The consequences were

disastrous. The offspring born as a result of these unions would eventually become the sworn enemies of Abraham's descendants.

The story of Lot's daughters is a solemn reminder there is often a cost associated with disobedience. The disappointment we sometimes feel in these kinds of circumstances reveals a lack of faith. We may even begin to question God's goodness. God never promised to grant our every wish. He has promised to meet our needs in the way that best suits His plan for our lives. We cannot

always grasp the details of His plan. We may think that our plans are better. But the experience of Lot's two daughters warn us that our attempts to take matters into our own hands and step outside the boundaries that God has set always ends badly.

Without faith
it is impossible
to please God
because . . . he
rewards those who
earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Apply the Word

Have you been tempted to think that obedience to God's Word will impede your happiness? Satan was the first to suggest that the path to fulfillment lay outside God's plan. He has not changed his tactics since Eden. You may experience pleasure in the short term, perhaps even a temporary satisfaction. In the long term you will regret the consequences.

Pray with Us

Today we ask that you remember in your prayers employees from the Financial Aid office: Anna-Marie Adams, Eugenia Jones, Adam Mincy, and Heather Shalley. We thank the Lord for all the work they are doing on behalf of our undergraduate students.

When You Are Forgotten

In her book *Permanent Present Tense*, author Suzanne Corkin tells the story of Henry Molaison, a man who was unable to make new memories after the age of 27 because of an operation on his brain. When he died at the age of 82, Molaison had no idea who Corkin was, even though she had worked with him for 46 years. Those who suffer from memory loss know how painful it is to forget. Those who love them know that it is even more painful to be forgotten.

While in prison, Joseph interpreted a strange dream for Pharaoh's cupbearer. The dream predicted that the cupbearer would soon be released and restored to his former position. Joseph begged the cupbearer to remember him and intercede with Pharaoh on his behalf. Instead, the cupbearer forgot about Joseph (Gen. 40:23). He did not remember him until two years later when Pharaoh had his own troubling dream and called for his

magicians and wise men to interpret it (Gen. 41:1–13).

During those years in prison it must have seemed to Joseph that God, like the cupbearer, had forgotten all about him. This was far from true. The intervening years turned out to be a divinely planned strategic delay. The cupbearer's guilt over this case of temporary amnesia motivated him to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph (Gen. 41:9). Joseph's interpretation got Pharaoh's attention and he placed Joseph in charge of the palace. This eventually enabled Joseph to rescue

his family from starvation and preserve their lives.

We are rarely able to see the greater workings of God's plan that lie behind the specifics of our disappointment. We may feel forgotten. He may seem to ignore our cry. But in reality we are never out of God's sight.

How long, LORD?
Will you forget me
forever? How long
will you hide your
face from me?

Psalms 13:1

Apply the Word

Does it seem as though God has forgotten all about you? You can express your fear and your frustration in prayer by using the words of the psalmist. Pray passages like Psalms 10:12, 13:1, and 44:24 to express the way you feel. Then read Deuteronomy 31:6, Matthew 28:20, and Hebrews 13:5 and meditate on these verses as God's reply.

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, requests the prayers of the Moody family for our ministries across the globe, as well as for the behind-the-scenes teams he oversees on Moody's Chicago campus. Both are important in God's kingdom!

When Things Go Against You

Someone has said, “When you finally see the light at the end of the tunnel, it’s probably a train.” When we experience disappointment, we have difficulty interpreting our circumstances. It feels as if everyone and everything have joined forces against us.

This was how Jacob felt when his sons asked for permission to take their youngest brother Benjamin back to Egypt with them. Jacob complained, “Everything is against me!” (Gen. 42:36).

Jacob was right about one thing. All this adversity was part of a plot. In fact, it was actually part of a double plot. Joseph was testing his brothers, perhaps in order to see whether they had changed since the day they sold him into slavery. But God was also at work in Joseph’s design, orchestrating the circumstances that would eventually bring Jacob and his entire family down to Egypt.

God works for
the good of those
who love him, who
have been called
according to his
purpose.

Romans 8:28

In the short term, this was intended to preserve their lives during a time of severe famine. God’s long-term goal in all of this was even greater. These events set the stage for the transformation of Jacob’s small tribe of a few families into a great nation.

In Egypt Jacob’s descendants would experience both blessing and adversity. Blessing would mark them as God’s chosen people. Adversity would prompt them to cry out to God for a deliverer named Moses, who would lead them to the brink of the land of promise.

Moses in turn would point Jacob’s descendants to an even greater deliverer. This deliverer was Jesus Christ (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22–26). Jacob and his sons had no way of knowing that all these circumstances that seemed to be against them were really part of a much larger plan that would eventually include us.

Apply the Word

God was at work in all these adverse circumstances, not only working them out for Jacob’s good but for ours as well. When everything seems to be going against you, take Corrie ten Boom’s advice: “When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don’t throw away the ticket and get off. You sit still and trust the engineer.”

Pray with Us

Those working behind the scenes include Natoshia Portis and part-time student staff who provide catering for various events on Moody’s Chicago campus. Please include them in your prayers as they bless Moody employees and guests with the gift of hospitality.

When Family Disappoints

Retired Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu once observed, “You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you, as you are to them.” Bishop Tutu is right. Family can be a great blessing. But it is also true that family members are a source of great pain.

If anyone had a right to be embittered about family, it was Joseph. He was misunderstood and wrongly accused of being conceited by his entire family (Gen. 37:1–10). His brothers were so jealous that they plotted his murder. They sold him into slavery. By the time his brothers finally asked for forgiveness, Joseph was not only in a position to take revenge, he had good reason to do so.

Joseph’s brothers threw themselves at his feet and offered to become his slaves, a fitting punishment in view of what they had done. But Joseph refused to pay them back in kind. Instead Joseph reas-

sured them saying, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen. 50:19–20). Joseph spoke kindly to them and provided for their families.

Lord, how many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me? Up to seven times?

Matthew 18:21

This was not a form of denial. Joseph did not minimize their behavior toward him. He acknowledged that they had intended to harm him. In the Hebrew text he clearly labels what they had done to him as “evil.” Joseph escaped bitterness because he was able to

discern the hidden hand of God behind his experience. God’s good purpose did not make Joseph’s brothers less responsible for their actions. Neither did it exempt Joseph from pain and suffering. It took the evil he had suffered and transformed it into an instrument of good for Joseph and for those whose lives he touched.

Apply the Word

The forgiveness described in today’s passage is offered freely—but is not without cost. It can be granted only by those who see their forgiveness as an extension of the forgiveness that Jesus Christ offers. It is grace that enables us to forgive (Matt. 18:21–22). The secret to overcoming bitterness is not to forgive and forget. It is to remember God and forgive.

Pray with Us

Over the years, Moody’s media ministries have changed countless lives and turned hearts to God. As our radio and publishing ministries use the advantages of digital media, we ask that you keep in prayer senior VP of Media, Greg Thornton, and his staff.

God's Hidden Plan in Disappointment

Many DVDs today have a special feature that allows viewers to listen to a commentary by the director as they watch the movie. The director's commentary often enables the viewer to see the events unfolding on the screen in a different light.

Today's passage is the "director's commentary" behind a series of misfortunes that befell one of the godliest men who ever lived. They describe a conversation between God and Satan about Job. This opening exchange, which Job had no way of observing, reveals three critical pieces of information.

First, the things that happened to Job were not punishment for his sins. He had done nothing to deserve the personal calamities he suffered. Job was "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (v. 1). Second, God was the one who initially drew Satan's attention to Job (v. 8). This is

not an account of Satan's vendetta against Job that God must somehow thwart. It is a story about God's mysterious plan for Job. Third, God establishes clear limits beyond which Satan was not permitted to go (v. 12, cf. 2:6).

Satan was correct when he observed that God had placed a hedge of protection around Job. In all Job's suffering, God never removed that hedge. He did narrow its perimeter for a time, but this was for a reason. God's aim was to make a point to Satan and to provide us with an example from which to draw comfort as we go through suffering. When the worst happens, God is still in control. He is not a passive observer of our troubles. Instead, He is an active participant in our lives, mysteriously orchestrating the events to accomplish His plan for us. He has set a hedge around us just as He did for Job.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:11

Apply the Word

We may not know why God allows certain things to come into our lives. We have a great advantage, however, that Job did not: we have the assurance of the Holy Spirit that He will never leave us or forsake us. This is a promise sealed in Christ's blood and guaranteed by His resurrection. The hedge God has placed around us will hold.

Pray with Us

Moody Publishers will be in our prayers for the next three days. Today, would you lift up to God Moody Publishers Sales department: Gene Eble, Stephen Gemeiner, Denise Ortiz, Laurence Rogers, and Roger Williams? We thank the Lord for their service.

When You Want to Curse God

Adversity does not always bring people together. Sometimes it drives them apart. This was initially the case with Job and his wife. When Satan raised the stakes in his attacks against Job by turning from his possessions and his children to his health, Job's wife seemed to have reached the limit of her patience. "Are you still maintaining your integrity?" she said. "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9).

Some commentators have drawn harsh conclusions about Job's wife based on this outburst. Augustine called her "the devil's assistant." Calvin accused her of being "Satan's tool." We might view her shocking declaration with more sympathy, however, if we put ourselves in her place. She had suffered along with Job. Except for the painful sores that covered Job from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, she had suffered the same afflictions that Job experienced. When Job lost his fortune, it meant that she lost hers as well. No doubt

she grieved the loss of all her children as deeply as Job did.

Her taunt may have been motivated by a kind of misplaced kindness. Perhaps she assumed like others that these tragedies were a sign that Job was under a curse. The pain of watching Job suffer may have prompted her to make the rash suggestion that Job accept God's verdict, curse God, and put an end to his misery. The fact that Job rebuked her for talking "like" a foolish woman could suggest that he considered these words to be both uncharacteristic and unworthy of her.

Job certainly does not seem like the kind of man who would have married a "foolish" woman, a description that is probably a euphemism for unbelief. Job's wife was not judged by God for her remarks. Nor was she singled out when the Lord rebuked Job's friends at the end of the book (Job 42:7).

How long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile your name forever?

Psalm 74:10

Apply the Word

Job's wife gave bad advice. But her words are a helpful reminder. When you face adversity, do not be surprised if you feel a measure of anger toward God. Ask Him to help you express yourself honestly and appropriately. He will extend the same patience toward you that He displayed with Job's wife. God is big enough to absorb your anger.

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers Moody Publishers Fulfillment department. Michael Alcazar, Junico Arroz, Lee Denton, and Arthur Eastern will appreciate your prayers as they fill Moody Publishers readers' orders with accuracy and commitment.

Expressing Disappointment to God

Mark's Gospel describes how the blind beggar Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus as he was leaving the city of Jericho with a large crowd. When the crowd tried to silence him, Bartimaeus cried out all the more. Jesus heard his cry and showed mercy to him (Mark 10:46–52).

Like Bartimaeus, Job did not believe in being silent about his suffering. Job's frank expression of his complaint in prayer was grounded in his conviction that God would listen sympathetically to his case. Job longed for a face-to-face

encounter but did not know where to go in order to find God. "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him," Job complained. "When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him" (Job 23:8–9).

In a way, Job's situation was much like that of Bartimaeus. He sensed that God

was near but did not know how to facilitate an encounter with Him. Job knew that God was aware of him and had some purpose in his suffering. He believed that he would be fully vindicated by God in the end. It was this conviction that gave Job the confidence to cry out to God, even when everyone else tried to silence him.

Evening, morning
and noon I cry out
in distress, and he
hears my voice.

Psalm 55:17

Job's assurance that God would accept him is striking when you consider that he had no Bible to draw on for this information.

We stand on even surer ground than Job did because we have Jesus Christ who serves eternally as our faithful High Priest.

This is why the writer of the book of Hebrews urges us to hold firmly to our faith and boldly approach God's throne. There we will find someone who understands our weakness and offers grace to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:14–15).

Apply the Word

Lament is a mode of worship that is rarely practiced in our churches today. We prefer music that is upbeat and positive. But for those who are in the midst of adversity, lament may provide a more meaningful experience. Try listening to Michael Card's album entitled *The Hidden Face of God* as a way to express yourself to God through the words of others.

Pray with Us

Please add to your prayer list these co-workers at Moody Publishers Fulfillment: Ernesto Laya, Chieu Nguyen, James Seffinga, Matthew Tran, and Nguyen Tran. We are grateful for their service of helping to bring Moody publications to readers across the country.

Questioning God

In the journal he kept after his wife's death from cancer, later published under the title *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis writes, "Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable."

Job came to see that the questions he had raised about his suffering were nonsense questions which God would not answer. Instead, the Lord responded to Job's questions with questions of His own: "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his?" (Job 40:8–9). This was not divine bullying. Rather, it was God's way of providing a needed reality check.

The Lord was not offended with Job because he had raised questions about his suffering. God took issue with the

implied criticism that lay behind Job's questioning. Instead of condemning Job, however, the Lord offered to engage him in a true dialogue (v. 7). Job admitted that he had spoken of things beyond his comprehension (Job 41:3). Job was satisfied in the end, not because all his questions had been answered, but because he had experienced God's presence (Job 42:1–6).

Job's experience mirrors those described in the Gospels. Jesus willingly engaged in dialogue with people who came to Him with questions. Some who questioned Him were sin-

cere. Others hoped to use their questions to lay a trap. Jesus did not always answer the questions that were brought to Him (Luke 20:1–8). The Savior's response was always suited to the state and the need of the questioner. Not only does Jesus know the answer to our most difficult questions, He knows what is in our hearts (John 2:24–25).

No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 22:46

Apply the Word

We should not be afraid to ask God our questions. But we should remember that we cannot compel Him to answer. He will patiently entertain any question that we might raise. When God's response is silence, we should not interpret this silence as dismissiveness. God has heard us clearly. He knows that we are not capable of understanding the answer.

Pray with Us

Lloyd Dodson, VP of Human Resources, and his team provide valuable service to Moody faculty and staff. Pray for them as they seek out and hire new employees, provide work-study for students, benefits for staff, and training for various departments.

Disappointed with God's Calling

Research published by Duke University's Pulpit & Pew initiative notes that clergy careers are affected by a shrinking number of large churches and an increase of small congregations that cannot afford to pay the pastor's salary. These trends can discourage those who aspire to serve in ministry as a vocation.

Today's passage shows that the very nature of the ministry may pose an even greater challenge to those who wrestle with a sense of God's call. Although Moses initially believed he was meant to be Israel's deliverer, an early failure caused him to wonder whether he was adequate for such a role (Acts 7:25, 35). Even after he said yes to God's call, Moses still had times when he questioned the wisdom of God's plan (Ex. 5:22–23).

The Lord never promised Moses an easy path. In the years that followed this encounter at the burning bush, Moses

faced opposition from friends and foes alike. He successfully led God's people to their chosen destination, but was not permitted to enter with them because he lost his temper at Kadesh in the Desert of Zin (Num. 20:1–13). God's promise to be with Moses did not make him immune to hardship, criticism, discouragement, or even failure. It did guarantee that despite all his difficulties Moses would never be abandoned.

Three times I
pleaded with the
Lord to take it away
from me.

2 Corinthians 12:8

The weaknesses and hardships we face are not unanticipated complications

that throw God into a panic and cause Him to modify His plan at the last minute. They are actually a part of His grand design for our lives. In particular, they are the crucible God uses to shape our character and teach us the discipline of dependence. Like the apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh," they serve as a remedy for our natural conceit and force us to rely more upon God's power than on our own strength (2 Cor. 12:1–10).

Apply the Word

Unrealistic expectations and unexpected setbacks often lead to discouragement. Either way, disappointment springs from the same source: God's plan does not follow the agenda we have planned for Him. Whether it is a matter of your ministry, chosen career, or family situation, your calling is to adapt to His plan for your life and rely on His strength.

Pray with Us

Our Procurement Services strives to be the best possible stewards of Moody resources when purchasing all the necessary equipment for Moody employees. You can encourage Paul Brackley, Brenda Crump, and Ed Jordan with your prayers today.

When Things Go Wrong

An adage known as Murphy's Law states: "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." A related saying, known as Finagle's Corollary to Murphy's Law, asserts: "Anything that can go wrong, will—at the worst possible moment."

Moses might have been tempted to agree. Called by God to rescue Israel from slavery in Egypt, Moses' first encounter with Pharaoh ended disastrously. Rather than agree to allow the Israelites to depart as Moses had demanded, Egypt's ruler then ordered their slave drivers and Israelite overseers to make their work harder. They did this by withholding necessary ingredients for making bricks (vv. 7–9). At the same time, Pharaoh commanded that the quota of bricks remain the same. Pharaoh accused Moses of distracting the people from their work by offering them false promises of deliverance.

I know that the king
of Egypt will not
let you go unless
a mighty hand
compels him.

Exodus 3:19

The Israelites blamed Moses for their hardship. Instead of seeing him as God's chosen instrument to lead them to freedom, they treated him as if he were their enemy (v. 21). Moses was so discouraged that he asked why God sent him to be Israel's deliverer in the first place. Moses' complaint is even worse than that of God's people. They blamed Moses for their problems, but Moses essentially accused God of being a failure: "Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all" (Ex. 5:23).

Moses might have held his tongue, if he had reflected more carefully on God's promise to him. Moses had been warned from the beginning that Pharaoh would initially be unwilling to release the Israelites. The Lord knew all along that it would take more than words to accomplish this task (Ex. 3:19–20).

Apply the Word

What seems like disaster to us is often the mysterious unfolding of God's plan. Do not be too quick to draw conclusions about what God is doing (or not doing) when things go wrong. We do not see the whole picture. As the hymn "Be Still, My Soul" assures: "Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake; / All now mysterious shall be bright at last."

Pray with Us

The Moody faculty trains our students in God's Word and helps them become mature servants of Christ. Please pray for our Educational Ministries professors: Gina Behrens, Christina Deppen, Timothy Downey, Dennis Fledderjohann, and Nancy Kane.

Disappointment and Complaining

A July 1, 2003 article in *Psychology Today* argues that depression can be contagious. “Like the flu, depression is a highly contagious disorder that can be transmitted socially,” the article’s author Ellen McGrath observes. “It is especially apt to take up residence in a household, jumping from one family member to others. And just as individuals can be depressed, so can whole families, often without their awareness.”

Complaining and disappointment also seem to be contagious and can be transmitted socially through conversation. Numbers 11:1–20 describes two instances of this during Israel’s journey through the wilderness. According to Numbers 11:1 they “complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD.” The Lord’s response suggests that more was involved than simply expressing dissatisfaction with their circumstances. An element of rage in their complaint sprang from an obstinate heart.

Do everything
without grumbling
or arguing.

Philippians 2:14

The second instance of grumbling described in today’s passage involved the menu, as God’s people grew tired of the daily supply of manna. This discontent began with a small group (“the rabble with them,” v. 4) and eventually spread throughout the entire camp.

It even affected Moses, whose frustration was so great that he asked God to end his life and relieve him of the burden of leadership. Moses vehemently did not approve of the congregation’s demand. The Hebrew text in

verse 10 literally says that “it was evil in his sight.”

Instead of blaming the congregation, however, Moses seems to have held God responsible for his troubles. According to verse 11 he complained, “Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?”

Apply the Word

We learned from Job that God is big enough to absorb our complaints. Moses’ experience shows us that the spirit in which our words are expressed also matters to God. One reason God cares about this is because our words affect others. Ask God for a discerning spirit today so that you can weigh your words before you speak them.

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for professors from the Educational Ministries department—Robert MacRae, Michael Milco, Elizabeth Smith, and Peter Worrall—ask God to refresh and encourage them as they minister to their students on a daily basis.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Homiletics



In Matthew 16:20, Christ tells His disciples not to say who He is. Was the reason that it

was early in His ministry or was it because the time hadn't come for them to say this before He was crucified?



In answer to your question, the consensus among commentators is that this command was a necessary precaution for a particular reason. As you suggest in your question, the time had not come for this kind of declaration, and the disciples were not yet fully aware of the nature of the Messiah—particularly a suffering Messiah. They were not ready to preach about Him to others with theological awareness and competence. They were probably still thinking of a conquering Messiah who could lead Israel to power. Preaching about such a Messiah could have led to real disruption among those hearing it. Before the disciples could preach Jesus as Messiah, they themselves had to grasp the full truth about Christ's calling, a truth they would understand in depth when they had received the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension (Acts 1–2).



If Christ died for all our sins, past, present, and future, and we have accepted His death on the cross, what does 1 John 1:9 mean about confessing our sins so that we will be forgiven?



Your question is insightful, and a full explanation demands a long discussion of context and word nuance beyond the scope of this space. To summarize briefly: John wants the believer, to whom this passage is directed, to understand and speak the same things about sin that God does. If a believer understands God's view of sin, it will be a deterrent to sin. We need to know and be able to express the doctrine of sin. "To confess" is best translated this way: To know and articulate what God says about sin enriches our knowledge and deepens our appreciation for God's forgiveness. John 1:8 and 10 tell us that we have sin in our lives, but we have fellowship with God because Christ has dealt with our sins, past and present. We still have to repent of our specific sins regularly. "Repent" means "changing our minds" about that sin. We do that most profoundly when we are fully aware of what sin is, and this is something we learn through reading Scripture (see 1 John 1:5–2:2). As we grow in our relationship with God by studying His Word, we will see His perspective on sin and have our own minds oriented away from that sin. Our confession and repentance demonstrate our relationship with God and our confidence in His promise of forgiveness.



What is the relationship between God's love for us and our life circumstances? Often it seems as though there is no reward for faithfulness. Sometimes I feel like the more faithful I am, the harder life gets.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

A

I have spent a great deal of time talking with friends about this profound dilemma that disturbs many people, myself included, from time to time. A friend reminded me of the words to one of the songs in *The Sound of Music*, the story of Maria and her eventual marriage to Captain Von Trapp. When he declares his love for her, she says: "Somewhere in my wicked childhood, I must have done something good." Here we have what is called the retribution principle, a principle commonly believed throughout the world (especially the ancient world) that states that the person who does good will receive blessings and the evil person will be punished.

One sees instances of people's belief in this principle throughout the Old Testament. Particularly vivid is the book of Job, in which three of Job's friends insist Job is being punished for some unconfessed sin. Job keeps trying to make a case for his righteousness, implying his own belief that goodness should be rewarded. God does not answer the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" but He does indicate that the end of the righteous will be good. We learn that in our finiteness we cannot know the mind of God or determine what He allows or doesn't allow. Only God is sovereign, and He can choose to do or allow whatever He wishes. The great comfort for those who struggle is to know that God is present in our suffering and that suffering can be a profound teacher and refiner.

Q

I've heard it said that Jesus endured humiliation and physical pain joyfully. How does this

fit with His agony in the garden when He asked, "may this cup be taken from me" (Matt. 26:39)?

A

The words of the great hymn "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," said to be written by Bernard of Clairvaux, describe the tension you write about: "O sacred Head, now wounded, / with grief and shame weighed down, / now scornfully surrounded / with thorns, thine only crown: / how pale thou art with anguish, / with sore abuse and scorn! / How does that visage languish / which once was bright as morn!"

Jesus was fully human as well as divine. When Jesus was incarnated, He opened Himself to the darkest dilemmas of being human. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the full weight of what was to happen overwhelmed Him; He was to die a terrible death utterly alone. Not only did His disciples abandon Him by falling asleep, but by bearing the sin of the world, Jesus was also separated from His beloved Father, the worst thing imaginable. He showed His intimacy with His father by praying to Him as "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me." Any of us who has said the same thing in a moment of suffering can be comforted by this real expression of anguish. Notable, however, are Jesus's following words, showing His utter submission to His calling: "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). To feel deep grief and to want to be spared agony can exist hand-in-hand with the courage that enables one to act with submission.

Disappointment and Ambition

In Lucy Maud Montgomery's classic novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne observes, "Oh, it's delightful to have ambitions. I'm so glad I have such a lot. And there never seems to be any end to them—that's the best of it. Just as soon as you attain to one ambition you see another one glittering higher up still. It does make life so interesting."

But when it is mixed with envy, ambition becomes toxic. This is especially true in ministry. Today's passage describes the conflict that arose when Miriam and Aaron began to criticize Moses and challenge his authority. The precipitating event seems strangely unrelated to Moses' leadership. Their initial complaint had to do with Moses' decision to marry a Cushite woman.

Virtually nothing is said about this woman in Scripture. Some Bible scholars think she was a woman Moses married after Zipporah. Others believe that the unnamed

"Cushite wife" spoken of in this passage was Zipporah herself. This incident seems more like a family dispute than a leadership crisis. But the real motive for the argument was jealousy over Moses' role as God's primary spokesperson (v. 2).

Make it your
ambition to lead a
quiet life.

1 Thessalonians 4:11

People wonder whether someone who was truly humble would describe himself as "a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). Possibly this assessment was added by someone other than Moses. Whatever its

origin, his response to this personal attack confirms the validity of the description. When Miriam was struck with leprosy, Moses prayed on her behalf and begged God to restore her (v. 11). Aaron equally deserved punishment but was probably spared because of his responsibilities as high priest. Leprosy would have made him unclean and disqualified him from this role (see Leviticus 13 and 14).

Apply the Word

Ambition can blind us to the real motives that drive our criticism. We convince ourselves that the things we say about others are both objective and fair. In reality, envy has distorted our perception. It magnifies the weaknesses of those we criticize and closes our eyes to our own shortcomings. Examine yourself first before you criticize another.

Pray with Us

Moody president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, requests your prayers for Moody's Missions Conference on our Chicago campus. The conference will last for the next three days, and Dr. Nyquist will speak at the opening session today.

Disappointment and Forgetting

Nostalgia is big business. The longing to revisit the past has spawned theme parks, television networks, lines of clothing, and countless resale shops. In most cases the past we desire to revisit is not the real past of our experience but an airbrushed recreation of our imagination. This false nostalgia was captured by author Carson McCullers when she observed, “We are homesick most for the places we have never known.”

It is astonishing to think that after praying so long for God’s deliverance, Israel eventually felt homesick for Egypt. This foolish nostalgia was sparked by reports that Canaan, the land that God had promised to them, was inhabited by the sons of Anak. These fierce warriors reminded the spies of the Nephilim, characterized in Genesis 6:1–6 as “heroes of old” and “men of renown.” The majority of those who had been sent to

investigate Canaan (Joshua and Caleb were the exception) were intimidated by their size and fighting prowess. The bad report they brought back sent the rest of the camp into a panic.

The terrifying prospect of facing such a powerful enemy brought the congregation to the brink of mutiny. They forgot God’s promises, questioning His motives for bringing them out Egypt. As Numbers 14:2–4 described that day: “All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them,

What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

Romans 6:21

‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?’ And they said to each other, ‘We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.’”

Apply the Word

Israel’s fear exaggerated the threat in Canaan and made Egypt seem more attractive than it really was. They never would consider returning if they were thinking clearly. Are you tempted to return to the way of life you left when you began to follow Christ? Don’t fall into the trap of nostalgia and whitewash the “things you are now ashamed of.”

Pray with Us

When praying for Moody, please continue to focus your prayers on Missions Conference. Would you specifically pray for our undergraduate students as they attend conference sessions every day? May they hear God’s calling for their lives!

Disappointment and Rebellion

Political agitators capitalize on popular disappointment to provide the energy needed for a change of regime, whether by ordinary means or by force. This was the strategy employed by Korah when he rebelled against Moses. Korah was a Levite. He was joined in his rebellion by Dathan and Abiram, from the tribe of Reuben.

This rebellion was about worship. Korah bristled that the high priesthood was restricted to Aaron. He accused Moses and Aaron of going too far and placing themselves above the rest of the congregation. Korah garnered support for his revolution from some of the Levites, whose primary role was to assist the priests by assembling and disassembling the tabernacle, as well as caring for the items of worship (Num. 1:50–51). Apparently, these Levites also wanted to share in the duties of the priests. Dathan and Abiram accused Moses of being an ineffective leader and

tyrant who only wanted to make the Israelites his personal slaves.

The seriousness of this insurrection was underscored by the severe punishment that followed. Moses and Aaron faced off against Korah and his 250 followers. Each took a censer, filled it with burning coals and incense and stood before the tent of meeting. The glory of the Lord appeared and God warned Moses of His intent to destroy the entire assembly, an indication of how pervasive the discontent had become. But Moses and Aaron interceded on behalf of the congregation and only Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were punished.

God determines how people should approach Him in worship. Ministry is a privilege and not a right. It cannot be demanded and is not deserved. The Holy Spirit distributes the gifts and callings of ministry “as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:11).

They have taken
the way of Cain;
they have rushed
for profit into
Balaam’s error.

Jude 1:11

Apply the Word

Sometimes we can trace our disappointment to rebellion. We grow dissatisfied with the parameters God has established for our lives and seek to fulfill our desires outside the boundaries He has set in His Word. These boundaries are not to torment us but rather to bless us. We are better off when we respect the boundaries God has put in place.

Pray with Us

Christine Gorz, VP of Marketing Communications, welcomes the prayers of the Moody community. Christine continuously asks for God’s leading and direction as she and the teams she leads seek to enlarge Moody’s outreach in the digital world.

Impatient with God

Nearly every parent who has traveled with a small child in a car has had to answer the question, “Are we there yet?” One mother’s stock reply to this repeated question was, “We’re closer than we’ve ever been.” Although it was a good answer, it elicited groans from the two small boys who sat in the back seat and were eager to reach their destination.

In Psalm 13 David asks God whether He will forget him forever. It is easy to see why he was anxious. His life was threatened by a foe who seemed to have gained the upper hand. The psalm does not give any indication of the specific events that prompted David to compose it, but the situation it describes is a familiar feature of his story. Although David alludes to multiple foes in the psalm, a single adversary seems to be in view. Perhaps this psalm was written while David was being pursued by King Saul. But it could just as easily have been written later in

David’s life, when he was running from his son Absalom.

In his commentary on this psalm, Charles Spurgeon observed: “We have been wont to call this the ‘How Long Psalm.’ We had almost said, the Howling Psalm, from the incessant repetition of the cry ‘how long?’” The psalm’s frank expression of disappointment, combined with its confident affirmation of trust in God, was typical of David’s prayer life.

Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long?

Lamentations 5:20

If it is true that one day is like a thousand years to the Lord, then it is no wonder we sometimes feel impatient with God. His sense of time is different from our own. God is not bound by the limitations of time, but He does have a timetable (Matt. 26:18; John 7:6; Acts 3:21; Rom. 5:6). Where God is concerned, delay does not mean disinterest. God will act on our behalf when the time is right. Until then we must be patient.

Apply the Word

One of the secrets to patience is to practice the art of self-talk. This is a feature of many of David’s psalms. In another psalm, David reminds himself of the need to “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him” (Ps. 37:7). Patience is not emotional detachment. We wait with eager longing.

Pray with Us

Please support in prayer the service of Frank Leber, VP of Information Systems. He works with a group of gifted men and women whose computer expertise and ministry perspective help all the departments at Moody in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Envyng the Wicked

Author F. Scott Fitzgerald observed, “Nothing is as obnoxious as other people’s luck.” The author of Psalm 73 would probably disagree. He would say that the success of the wicked is even more grating.

This psalm is attributed to Asaph, a Levite and one of David’s chief musicians. Although we know nothing about the specific events that compelled Asaph to write this psalm, its confessional nature provides us with a clear idea of the feelings that prompted it.

Asaph describes a low point in his spiritual life. He was frustrated that the outward circumstances of the wicked are often better than those of the righteous.

Asaph’s graphic description in verses 4 through 12 highlights the ease, wealth, and arrogance of the wicked. They are set apart from other people. They do not seem to experience the same troubles (v.

5). They are arrogant and appear to get away with murder (vv. 6–10). What vexed him most, however, was their insolence toward God. They acted with impunity out of a conviction that God was ignorant of their behavior (v. 12). When Asaph compared this with his own daily experience of affliction and discipline, it seemed that he had pursued righteousness in vain (v. 13).

Do not let your
heart envy sinners,
but always be
zealous for the fear
of the LORD.

Proverbs 23:17

The turning point came in the context of worship. While in the sanctuary Asaph came to understand the fate of those who reject God. This enabled him to regain his spiritual equilibrium. As Asaph took the final destiny of the wicked into account, he realized that he was far better off than them. The advantages they enjoyed lost their appeal for him. He saw these things as a divinely laid trap that would eventually cast them down into ruin. When everything was weighed in the balance, Asaph possessed the greater treasure.

Apply the Word

The point of this psalm is not that we should rejoice in the destruction of the wicked. It is meant to provide a remedy for our jealousy. The advantages of the wicked that we are tempted to envy work against them in the end. They need our prayers that God will open their eyes to the righteousness that only Jesus Christ can provide.

Pray with Us

We are grateful for modern computer technology, and we are even more grateful for the people who use it for God’s glory at Moody. Would you pray today for our Systems and Programming staff—Sherman Jules, John Kim, Gina Lee, and Juan Lemus?

Spiritual Depression

Charles Spurgeon was one of the greatest preachers of the nineteenth century. He also struggled with depression. Spurgeon believed that depression was a common experience for most believers: “Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy.”

Depression is prolonged sadness and can be debilitating. Today’s passage describes an instance so severe that Elijah begged God to take his life. Several factors seem to have contributed to this emotional crisis. Elijah had confronted King Ahab and 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16–40). He had also spent time in concentrated prayer, after which he ran 25 miles from Mount Carmel to Jezreel. When his life was threatened by Queen Jezebel, Elijah traveled another hundred miles to

Beersheba, where he left his servant. He then went another day’s journey into the wilderness, sat under a large shrub known as broom bush. Physically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted, he asked God to take his life (1 Kings 19:4).

Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.

Jonah 4:3

Instead of granting the prophet’s request, the Lord sent an angel who prescribed a regimen of rest and food before Elijah undertook the next stage of his journey, a forty-day trip to Mount Horeb (another name for Mount Sinai).

This was the spot where the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:1–2). The angel seemed to know that this was Elijah’s intent. The Lord’s question in verse 13 is further evidence that Elijah was acting on his own and not under orders. The Lord dealt compassionately with Elijah and did not rebuke him. Instead, He gave the prophet further directions to let him know that he was not alone.

Apply the Word

You do not need to be ashamed if you are struggling with depression. Seek help from someone today. Talk to your pastor or ask for a reference to a reputable Christian counselor. If you would like to explore the subject further, try reading the book *Spiritual Depression* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Eerdmans).

Pray with Us

Keeping in prayer our Systems and Programming staff, please add Pepi Manieson, Diane Rogers, and John Saucedo to your prayer list. Pray for God’s love and grace to overflow in their lives as they follow Him.

When You Feel Cheated by God

In Bill Watterson's cartoon strip *Calvin and Hobbes*, the little boy Calvin likes to play a game with his stuffed tiger Hobbes called CalvinBall. Its main feature is that Calvin gets to make up the rules as he goes along.

Jeremiah might have felt as if God was playing a similar game with his life. In today's passage he complains that God has dealt unfairly with him. Jeremiah uses surprisingly strong language to describe his disappointment with God in these

verses. The Hebrew term that is translated "deceived" in verse 7 is a word used to describe seduction in 1 Kings 22:16. It is the same word used to speak of Delilah's act of luring Samson into telling her the secret of his strength (Judges 16:5). Jeremiah initially felt qualms about serving as God's prophet (Jer. 1:6). After much opposition and hardship Jeremiah felt as if God had bullied him into his calling.

Woe to me if I do
not preach
the gospel!

1 Corinthians 9:16

When Jeremiah tried to walk away from his prophetic vocation, he found he could not. The Holy Spirit compelled him to speak (v. 9). In his commentary, Philip Graham Ryken notes that Jeremiah wasn't talking about the pleasure he gets from speaking on God's behalf. "He was not eager to

preach but reluctant," Ryken explains, "for he knew that judgment would pour out as soon as he opened his mouth."

No wonder Jeremiah was reluctant to speak. His message was so unwelcome that even his friends were

waiting for him to slip, perhaps so they could denounce him as a false prophet and silence him (v. 10). If this was how Jeremiah's "friends" thought about him, what kind of treatment he must have received from his enemies! Even in this dark hour, Jeremiah still could see that God had not removed His hand from his life. On the threshold of despair, Jeremiah was still able to worship God (v. 13).

Apply the Word

Be careful about assumptions you make about God's plan for your life. These assumptions often lead to unrealistic expectations. When we discover that God has a different plan or timetable for us, we feel like we have been cheated. God does not lie. He is not a bully. But He is in charge.

Pray with Us

Our undergraduate students have much work with their course load after several days of Missions Conference. Dr. Larry Davidhizar, Dean of the Undergraduate School, asks Moody friends to bless these young people by praying for them.

When Life Seems Pointless

William Cowper was the poet responsible for the hymn “God Moves in a Mysterious Way.” He was a devoted follower of Jesus Christ who struggled with depression most of his adult life. He attempted to take his own life on three occasions and at one point was even placed in an asylum.

We have already seen that God’s servants are sometimes so disappointed that they can wish they had never been born. Job felt this way. Elijah did, too. In today’s passage Jeremiah curses the day he was born (v. 14). It is striking to note that in the biblical text, Jeremiah expresses this disturbing sentiment immediately after an outburst of praise in verse 13.

These are not the words of a backslider or someone with a shallow faith. Jeremiah was a man of deep faith who had an intimate relationship with God. He knew how to communicate with God as with a

friend. It is significant that these words appear in a context of worship. Jeremiah’s painful lament is a reminder that true worship is not a matter of putting on our best clothes and our Sunday smiles as we mouth pious words that we do not really mean. True worship is a matter of fearlessly approaching the throne of grace and bringing with us all our doubts, distress, and hard questions.

At the same time, it is important to note how God responds to Jeremiah’s cry of anguish. Jeremiah concludes his prayer with the bitter question of verse 18: “Why did I ever come out

of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?” But God does not provide an answer. How are we to understand this silence of God? We should interpret it as the patient response of a loving Father who knows that there are times when the best thing to do is simply to listen.

I declared that the
dead, who had
already died, are
happier than the
living, who are
still alive.

Ecclesiastes 4:2

Apply the Word

Do you identify with the wish of Job, Elijah, and Jeremiah? Do not keep it a secret. Call somebody today to talk about it. Your pastor or a Christian friend that you trust is a good place to start. If you can think of no one to contact, you can call the National Hopeline Network at 1-800-784-2433. Someone will be happy listen.

Pray with Us

Moody Central, a one-stop student services center, appeared this year on our Chicago campus to provide services to students and answer their questions in one place. Pray with us for its manager, Jim Burdick, and for the students he serves.

When You Want More

A plumber was working in a rich man's home. When he was finished, he asked the owner if he could ask a personal question. "How much money is enough?" the plumber asked. The wealthy man thought for a moment, then with a smile he replied: "Just a little more."

Disappointment is linked with desire. In itself desire is not bad. Desire is often what motivates us to improve ourselves and strive for something better. But desire can be a destructive force in our lives. James warned about the destructive potential of desire in James 4:1–3: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that

you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

The solution is not to eliminate desire but to place our desires under the authority of Christ. In today's text Jesus shows us how to orient our priorities. His question in verse 25 must have puzzled His hearers. It is true that life is more important than food, and the body is more important than clothing. But without food we cannot live, and the body needs clothing to stay warm.

But if we have
food and clothing,
we will be content
with that.

1 Timothy 6:8

Jesus was not minimizing basic needs but pointing His disciples beyond their needs to the one who is our great provider. The God who has given us life and the body already knows that we have need of all these things (v. 32). "Care can only be cured by care," theologian Helmut Thielicke observed. "Care about many things can be cured only by care about 'the one thing needful.'"

Apply the Word

The concerns we have about food, clothing, and employment are important to us. They are also important to God. The same love that prompts Him to provide for these daily needs also compelled Him to provide for our spiritual needs. He offers righteousness as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ. Ask Him to provide you with your most important need.

Pray with Us

Today starts the 2-day Moody Radio fundraiser—Operation Next. As Moody Radio touches thousands of lives with the love of God, Collin Lambert, VP of Moody Radio, would be grateful for your prayers and financial support of Moody Radio's ministry.

When God Shows Up Late

In the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, the two main characters Vladimir and Estragon wait for someone named Godot who never shows up. Many have suggested that unseen character Godot represents God. At one point Vladimir asks a boy who passes by what Godot does. The boy tells him, “He does nothing, sir.”

God doesn’t always show up when we would like. This was the disappointment Mary and Martha experienced when Lazarus became ill. They sent word to Jesus, who had retreated across the Jordan to the place where John had baptized Him. Jesus went there to escape the reach of the religious leaders who tried to arrest Him. But He did not go into hiding. Apparently Jesus’ location was not a secret. Mary and Martha knew how to get in touch with Him, and John 10:41 says that “many people” came to Him there to be healed.

Wait for the LORD;
be strong and
take heart and wait
for the LORD.

Psalm 27:14

The wording of the sisters’ message in verse 3 emphasized the depth of feeling Jesus had for Lazarus. Jesus was close to this family. He often stayed with them when he was in Bethany. The narrator makes it clear that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (v. 5). This puts in context His decision to stay two days longer in Bethany across the Jordan. Jesus was not ignoring their request.

Both sisters said the same thing when Jesus finally arrived on the scene: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (vv. 21, 32). This is not

an implied criticism but an affirmation of faith mixed with grief.

Disappointment did not shake their faith in Jesus. But the Savior’s subsequent words and actions made it clear that Martha and Mary needed additional understanding to accompany their faith.

Apply the Word

God is not like Godot. Although He is invisible, He is not absent. God is always at work, even when He seems to be doing nothing. God works according to His own will and His own plan. He will not be a slave to our timetable. Although He may not show up when we expect, He is always right on time.

Pray with Us

As Moody Radio’s Operation Next continues, we’d like to pray for Marketing and Development staff: Stephen Asare, Teri Vaughn, and Scott Veigel. Thank the Lord for their work and ask for His grace and guidance in their lives.

When You Feel Forsaken

One theologian describes Jesus' cry from the cross as "more a shriek than a saying." It sounds like a cry of despair. In reality it is an affirmation of faith. It is a lament, but it is also liturgy. These words uttered from the cross would have been very familiar to Jesus' listeners because they quote the first verse of Psalm 22.

Jesus was aware of the prophetic significance of this psalm, which predicted the suffering of Israel's Messiah, when He took these words upon His lips. This does not mean that the words had no emotional value for Him. It is clear from the Scriptures that Jesus had a rich and intimate prayer life. He often secluded Himself for the purpose of prayer (Matt. 14:23; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28). His prayers leading up to this moment of suffering were both intimate and frank. Jesus expressed the distress He felt in anticipation of His suffering to

His disciples and to His Heavenly Father (Matt. 26:38–39). Following the pattern of the Psalms, Jesus also expressed His confidence in God in prayer (John 17:1–26).

Jesus provides a model to follow when we feel forsaken. We should express ourselves to the community of believers but with realistic expectations. If the disciples slept when Jesus asked them to "watch and pray" along with Him, we should not be surprised if they sometimes disappoint us as well (Matt. 26:38–40). When we pray to the Father, we should express ourselves truthfully. We should not try to tell God what we think He wants to hear. He already knows what is in our hearts and is aware of our words before they are spoken (Ps. 139:4). He will not be shocked by our honesty. At the same time, we should express ourselves in faith.

But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

Psalm 22:19

Apply the Word

The pattern of prayer in the Psalms and prophets combines frankness with faith. In a kind of call and response, Psalm 22 begins with a cry of despair and concludes with an affirmation of faith. Why not try to write your own psalm of prayer following this pattern. Begin with the cry of your heart. Then write what you think God might say to you in reply.

Pray with Us

It's a privilege to pray for Moody Radio and its ministry. Today, pray for its Integrated Marketing team, Michael Chapin, Scott Krus, Cody Fraser, Julianne Opperwall, and David Woodworth, who facilitate Moody Radio's outreach over the airways.

When You Misread God's Plan

The day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday is sometimes called Holy Saturday. It is a day of silence in Scripture. Nothing is said about where the disciples were or what they were doing on that day. It seems likely that they were in hiding, perhaps secluded in the upper room where they had observed the Passover (cf. Acts 1:13).

Some of their thoughts were expressed by the two disciples in today's passage who traveled to Emmaus. Cleopas, the only one named, is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. Later church tradition identified him with Clopas, the husband of Mary who stood near the cross during the crucifixion (John 19:25).

Cleopas expressed the disappointment all the disciples felt between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Like anyone who has suffered the loss of someone they

love, they must have reminisced about the past and grieved over unfulfilled expectation (vv. 19–21). Perhaps they shared their favorite stories about events from Jesus' ministry and mused over their own mistakes. Most of them do not seem to have remembered Jesus' predictions of

His resurrection. So far the reports brought back by those who visited the empty tomb, even those who had encountered the risen Christ, amazed them. Were these visions?

Jesus diagnosed this as a problem of faith: "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the

prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:25–27). Even then, the two disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus until He opened their eyes.

"For my thoughts
are not your
thoughts, neither
are your ways my
ways," declares the
LORD.

Isaiah 55:8

Apply the Word

These disciples needed two things to correct their misreading of God's plan: to understand the Scriptures and Christ to open their eyes. When we experience profound disappointment because we have misunderstood God's plan for our lives, we need the Scriptures to reorient our thinking and the Lord's help to interpret the significance of our circumstances.

Pray with Us

We invite you to pray for Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer at Moody, as he provides expertise, good stewardship, and consistent leadership in the area of finances. Our prayer is that God would continue to bless Moody with faithful, prayerful supporters.

When You Need to Start Over

Déjà vu is a French phrase that means “already seen.” It describes that uncanny sense of familiarity we sometimes have when going through an experience for the first time. Scientists think that one explanation for this phenomenon is that the mind recognizes the patterns of things around us by comparing them to previous experiences where similar items were arranged in the same way.

Peter must have felt a sense of *déjà vu* when he cast the net on the other side of the boat at the suggestion of a “stranger” on the shore and hauled in the largest catch of his career. Only it wasn’t *déjà vu* at all. It was history repeating itself. Three and a half years earlier Jesus had told Peter to do the same thing and then promised that in the future he would be “catching men” (Luke 5:10).

There is surely a
future hope for you,
and your hope will
not be cut off.

Proverbs 23:18

The catch of fish in today’s passage was intended to remind Peter of this initial promise, just as Jesus’ three questions were designed to bring to mind Peter’s great failure (Matt. 26:69–75). Jesus’ prediction in verse 18 may sound like a warning, but in reality it was a promise. This was Christ’s assurance that

Peter would one day follow through on his broken promise to be faithful to Jesus to death (Matt. 26:35).

As Jesus said these things, Peter caught a glimpse of John trailing behind and raised the question that many of us would have asked if we were in his position: “Lord, what about

him?” (v. 21). This is the same question every child asks when assigned an unwelcome chore while a sibling is standing nearby. Jesus’ reply was as direct as Peter’s question: “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me” (v. 22).

Apply the Word

There are five imperatives in this exchange between Jesus and Peter, but only one call. It was the same call Jesus issued at the beginning. It will be the same call when Peter finally reaches the end. Jesus’ call to us in failure is the same call He extends to us in success. Even when your best effort has failed, Jesus issues this invitation: “You must follow me.”

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers our Treasury Operations team. Ask the Father to grant Eunice Childress, Janet Mitchell, and Holly Motta joy and peace for their spirits, and attention to detail and clarity for their minds as they handle Moody’s financial matters.

When Leaders Fail

Ralph Waldo Emerson observed, “Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.” When it comes to leadership, he might also have said that our chief want is someone who will show us what we *should* be. We expect our leaders to be better than we are. This is especially true in the church, where a fundamental prerequisite for leadership is that they be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Consequently, when a leader behaves inconsistently, as Peter did while in Antioch, our disappointment can often lead to disillusionment.

Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless.

Titus 1:7

Peter’s failure in this instance was inconsistency. He already knew that God’s grace was offered to Jews and Gentiles alike (Acts 10:34; 11:18). At issue here was more than whether the uncircumcised Gentile believers would be treated as second-class citizens. Ultimately, Peter’s inconsistent behavior towards Gentile believers jeopardized the gospel itself (Gal. 2:5, 14).

If “above reproach” means without fault, then nobody in the church is qualified for leadership. Since no leader is perfect, failure is inevitable. How should we respond when a leader

fails? The same as we would concerning any other believer. We should speak the truth in love, hold them accountable for their actions, and forgive those who repent. Though there are some kinds of failure that disqualify a person from holding office in the church, even those people can be restored to fellowship.

How should we respond when a leader fails? We should not be surprised. Failure is common for anyone who is on the learning curve. Peter’s discipleship included many instances of failure. This case was particularly important because it forced the church to think through the practical implications of its mission to the Gentiles. The essence of

Apply the Word

The admonition in 1 Timothy 5:19 says no charge against an elder should be given credence unless it has been substantiated by two or three witnesses. This is consistent with Matthew 18:15–20. Leaders are not exempt from discipline but are entitled to due process. Should public rebuke be necessary, it is intended to admonish the entire church.

Pray with Us

Keeping Treasury Operations in our prayers, you can encourage Paulette Phillips, Lindsey Reimers, Diane Sergeant, and Catrina Weinum. Pray that they would glorify God with their service at Moody.

When You Hate Church

Carol was dismayed when her church added another service with a worship style that she did not appreciate. She feels that some styles are more of a hindrance than a help to her worship. She is not exaggerating when she says, “I can’t worship to that music.”

There can be many instances when we have a problem with our church and want to leave. In Carol’s case, it was the worship style. In today’s passage the issue was more complicated: fear of persecution. These Jewish believers were under fire for their belief in the gospel and had begun to waver in their faith (Heb. 10:32–36). Fear of persecution made it tempting to withdraw from the assembly of believers. The fact that the author of Hebrews expected this letter to reach his readers could suggest that they continued to meet, but perhaps they were not part of a larger congregation where Gentiles

were present. Other scholars think that the Hebrews were believers in Christ who were part of a synagogue that had begun meeting together as Christians but now were considering disbanding because of opposition to the gospel.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42

Whatever the reason for their discomfort, the remedy was not to give up meeting together but to devote themselves to the task of mutual encouragement. The language used to describe the purpose for their assembling is interesting. The Greek word that is translated “spur one another on” (v. 24)

means to “stir up.” It is used in a negative sense in Acts 15:39 to speak of the disagreement that arose between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark. Here the word is used in a positive sense to speak of rousing one another to love and good works. This kind of positive agitation does not happen without careful thought.

Apply the Word

No matter how imperfect the church we attend may be, we still need the church. What is more, the church needs us. Today’s reading teaches us not to give up on the church, but to use our gifts to make it better. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom as you “study” your church to discern how God can use you to encourage others to follow Jesus.

Pray with Us

We ask that you pray for Moody trustees as they participate in the Board of Trustee meeting on Moody’s Chicago campus. Pray for God’s wisdom and guidance in every decision.

When You Want Revenge

In her book entitled *In the Presence of My Enemies*, Gracia Burnham tells how she and her husband Martin were captured and held hostage by terrorists in the Philippine jungle, an ordeal that ended with her husband's death. At one point during her imprisonment Gracia found a piece of paper and began writing down all the promises of the Bible she could remember. "A couple of days later when I was in a less spiritual mood," Gracia writes, "I thought of another divine promise to add to my list: Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Gracia Burnham may not have been as unspiritual as she thought. According to Revelation 6:1–10, one of the prayers of the martyrs in heaven is a prayer that God would avenge their blood. How do we reconcile this with the Bible's theology of forgiveness and grace? The biblical doctrine of forgiveness cannot

be separated from its teaching about righteousness and justice. It is God's righteousness and justice that make it necessary for us to receive the gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. If we minimize the importance of divine justice, we cheapen the idea of forgiveness. The desire to see justice done is a characteristic of those who are righteous (Deut. 27:19; Ps. 33:5; Isa. 1:17; Luke 18:8).

While it is not wrong to want justice to be done, according to Romans 12:19 we must "leave room"

(literally "give place") to God and allow Him to act in His own way and time. This is necessary because we are not without our own guilt. Whatever standard we hold for others can be applied to us (Matt. 6:12, 14–15). Fortunately for us, the shed blood of Jesus Christ enables God to be "just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

The LORD is a God
who avenges.
O God
who avenges,
shine forth.

Psalm 94:1

Apply the Word

The way to handle our desire for revenge is not to dismiss or minimize the offense that has been committed against us. Instead we allow God to settle our accounts, knowing He has graciously cancelled our own debt of sin. This gives us freedom to pray for those who have wronged us, trusting God to deal with them according to His justice and mercy.

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education welcomes your prayers for the ministry of education at Moody Bible Institute. Moody was founded and sustained by prayers of God's people, and we rely on them now more than ever.

God's Cure for Disappointment

An old gospel song written by Albert E. Brumley begins, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." Each stanza that describes the joys of heaven concludes, "And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

Brumley's much-loved song is only partly right. This world will not be our home in eternity. We are waiting for another world that is to come. This new world, described in today's passage as "a new heaven and a new earth," will be one where the present divide between heaven and earth has been removed. God's dwelling will be among His people (v. 3). Death and pain will be banished. God will wipe every tear from our eyes (v. 4). At that time we will enjoy an eternal glory that outweighs every "momentary trouble" that we may have experienced during our earthly pilgrimage (2 Cor. 4:17). All our disappointments, if they are even re-

membered at all, will seem to be of little consequence in comparison.

This new heaven and earth will retain some of the features of the old. People will dwell upon the earth. It will include the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 24). But there will be significant differences, including no more night. The light of the sun or moon will not be necessary in this new world (Rev. 21:23).

Human relationships will continue but they will change. And the curse of sin will finally be eliminated. As the beloved hymn,

"Be Still, My Soul," puts it: "Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on / When we shall be forever with the Lord. / When disappointment, grief and fear are gone, / Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored. / Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past / All safe and blessed we shall meet at last."

For the Lamb at the center before the throne will be their shepherd.

Revelation 7:17

Apply the Word

As long as we are living on this side of eternity, we will experience disappointment. We should not deny its existence. Instead we look beyond our disappointment and set our sights on the hope that lies before us: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Pray with Us

Today, let's reflect on the lessons we learned from this month's study. Let's thank the Lord for His grace, His mercy, and for the ability He gives us by His Spirit to trust Him even in the midst of hardships and disappointments.

heard, for instance, in our contemporary worship songs. We describe a Jesus who meets our every need and fulfills our every longing. Is the contemporary evangelical church setting up Christians for disappointment with Jesus by the way we talk about Him in our worship?

JK: A former student once complained about the church's use of what he called "the language of unsustainable intimacy" when it comes to Christ. The "language of unsustainable intimacy" gives the false impression that intimacy with Christ can be experienced and maintained by the same mechanisms that sustain ordinary relationships: physical presence, touch, and conversation. But the relationship we have with Christ is both like and unlike common human relationships. As C. S. Lewis observed, "God is both further from us, and nearer to us than any other being."

HM: A friend of mine is going through a tremendous series of challenges. She said, "I read in Scripture where it says that your earthly father would not give His child stones when he asked for bread, and how much greater is your heavenly Father. But it feels exactly like God is giving me stones right now. How do I continue to believe that God is really

good when I am not experiencing any of that goodness?" How do you respond to Christians who are suffering and breaking?

JK: I think this was exactly the point Satan tried to make when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness and challenged Him to turn the stones to bread. Perhaps this experience was even in Jesus' mind when He told His disciples, "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?" Our problem is that we are all too eager to be satisfied with that which is not bread. We are happy with the stones that look like bread. Even though the bread the Father provides may sometimes look like a stone to us, it is real bread. He does not always give us what we want; He does give us what we need.

HM: Your books are known for their humor, insight, and honesty. You call for the church to be more honest and transparent in our interactions with each other. What are some examples of ways that we can be more honest with each other?

JK: The basic rule is the principle found in Ephesians 4:15. We need to practice the rigorous discipline of "speaking the truth in love." But there are two essential elements to this: truth and love. Truth without love is cold and comfortless. Love without truth is mere sentimentality.

The Surprising Grace of Disappointment by John Koessler is available from Moody Publishers (www.shopmoodypublishers.com) and from other online retailers and Christian bookstores.

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*With your
help, this
won't happen!*

Dear Friend of Moody Radio,

Two years ago, with your help, we completed Phase 1 of **Operation Next** — replacing and adding equipment that was critical to ensure that we would be on whenever you tuned in.

Since that time, our engineers have continued to vigilantly monitor and repair other vital broadcasting equipment that was performing adequately but nearing the end of its useful life. To be good stewards, they have worked hard to extend the life of this equipment as long as possible.

Our engineers are now telling us that we've waited as long as we can, and it is time to finish the **final phase of Operation Next**. The timing is crucial to get the job done! If we wait too long, there could come a time when you tune in and hear . . . silence.

We can't let this happen!

That's why I'm asking friends like you for help right now. To be sure, **Operation Next** is about much more than finishing the job of replacing old equipment. It's about providing friends like you with what you need to strengthen your faith.

Please visit MoodyRadio.org or call 1-800-600-9624 to give a gift to **Operation Next**. Thank you in advance for your gift.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. Paul Nyquist, Ph.D.

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