

Disappointments New Christians Face

3 John 3-4

Introduction: There are great joys in seeing Christians grow in the faith (3 John 3-4; 2 John 4). Unfortunately, not all Christians grow as they should; especially new Christians. Problems and disappointments overwhelm them and some fall away. This ought to concern us because Christians have a responsibility to those who are young in the faith (Rom. 15:1-2; Gal. 6:1-2). This lesson is intended to help us understand and deal with some of the disappointments that new Christians face.

I. Disappointment in themselves.

A. Do you remember when you became a Christian? It's a time of great excitement (Acts 8:39). We enjoy the forgiveness of sins, the chance to start over and the new relationship with our savior.

B. But we discovered that temptations are just as strong as before and sometimes stronger. This easily discourages many new Christians (Luke 8:13).

C. How can we help?

1. Remind them that change is an on-going process (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:5-11). "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" means to constantly change one's thinking morally and spiritually as to cause a change in one's actions.

2. By teaching them of God's willingness to forgive (1 John 1:9; 2:1; Phil. 2:12-13). We must lay aside the sins which constrain us (Heb. 12:1).

II. Disappointment in the brethren.

A. They witness inconsistencies in the lives of others. They see those who don't practice what they preach. It really hurts when they see a lack of faith in those who they respect. Unfortunately, this problem is not new. Peter caused much disappointment with his lack of consistency (Gal. 2:11-14).

B. They witness poor treatment among the brethren in Bible classes, at work, in business meetings or in public where harsh words devastate the young in faith.

C. What can we do?

1. Set good examples. Timothy was told to be an example for the believers (1 Tim. 4:12)!

2. Help the new Christians to realize that others are dealing with much the same problems in life. For example, the Apostle Paul wasn't perfect either (Phil. 3:12-14). He had to constantly work at doing what was right!

III. Disappointments in the world.

A. The cares and responsibilities of life (job, family, hobbies, entertainment) often draws them away to the point of being unfruitful (Luke 8:14).

B. The discouragement from old friends who don't share in the love of the Lord (Rom. 1:32). It is sometimes hard to leave old friends (1 Cor. 15:33-34).

C. What can we do?

1. Demonstrate what it means to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). That means the Lord and His church come first.

2. Make it clear by our example that we do not love the world (1 John 2:15-17). That means Christ comes first.

3. Develop friendships with new Christians. They need your support (Gal. 6:2, 10)!

IV. Disappointments in life.

A. Many new Christians think all their problems will go away. Yet, it is problems that we must expect (James 1:2-4).

B. How can we help?

1. By helping to change the way they look at life. Trials of life will actually strengthen us (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

2. By preparing new Christians for adversity (2 Tim. 3:12; Acts 14:21-22).

Conclusion: Christians seem to go in stages in their spiritual life.

A. The "ball of fire" stage characterized by great zeal following their conversion to Christ.

B. The "reality" stage when the disappointments we discussed seem to set in.

C. The "do or die" stage where they eventually grow beyond the disappointments or become complacent, apathetic (pew warmers) or just fall away.

D. The "steady as you go" stage where growth is constant and progressive (Prov.4:18).

To reach this stage in life where we grow steadily, we must have realistic expectations. It is when our expectations aren't realistic that we become disappointed.