Is God Disappointed with Me?

Resting in God's Approval



Serge Grace at the Fray

Marc Davis

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Think about this for a moment: If God were to turn his gaze specifically to you and let his eyes linger there, what would his facial expression be? What body language would accompany the words he might say to you?

Many Christians have a hard time imagining that God would look at them with a warm smile of affection and delight. For many, their immediate reaction is to imagine God regarding them with an eye roll, a face palm, a sigh, a frown, or folded arms of frustration. Why?

This gut reaction is born out of a deep sense that we don't measure up. God knows our failures, large and small, in intimate detail—not just our long-ago failures, but our present-day shortcomings too. Sometimes it seems like examples crowd one on top of another in our minds; we can't consider one before the next one interrupts and adds its accusation on top of the last.

The variety of failures is something to behold. You yelled at the kids. You left the car window open and the interior got soaked in the rain. You had good intentions to have the new neighbors over for a barbecue, but somehow the summer came and went and it never happened. You spent the better part of an evening rehashing an old resentment. You got a gym membership but haven't been there for three

months. A hundred things. Surely God is looking at you and shaking his head, wishing you would just get your act together. Right?

Understanding Our Inner Dialogue

Each of us has an inward life of thoughts and impressions, an inner dialogue that runs in the background of our busy and chaotic lives. We may not even be fully aware of many of the ideas that pass through our heads as we drive to work, wash the dishes, or mow the lawn. Some of our thoughts are coherent and well-developed, while others are only vague and half-cooked. But even a vague, unarticulated idea can be very powerful, a whispered word in our ears that robs us of joy and courage.

The persistent thought *God is disappointed with me* resonates with more people than you might think. It quietly finds space in the hearts and minds of even longtime followers of Jesus, people who trust Christ for salvation but who nonetheless are troubled by a lingering notion that God somehow disapproves of them.

Here is our task together: We're going to engage this idea of God's attitude toward us. We're going to hold our thoughts up to the light—to what God actually says in the Bible—and invite him to help us sort them out.

Is God Disappointed Because I'm Weak?

There are two ways in which our sense of our own poor performance might cause us to feel that God must surely be frustrated or disappointed with us. The first has to do with failures that expose us as weak or incompetent. The following examples might feel familiar:

- I forgot to do something important at work, and I let people down.
- I tried to make a nice home-cooked meal for a loved one's birthday, but it turned out badly.
- I failed to meet a vocational goal that was important to me. I always wanted to be a doctor, and my whole extended family knew that and celebrated it—but then I couldn't get through organic chemistry.
- I overslept again and didn't spend time with the Lord.
- I had five things on my to-do list today, and I sort of did one of them, but not very well.
- I tried to do a home repair, but I ended up making things worse and we had to pay someone to fix my mess.
- I got tongue-tied and completely missed the opportunity to share Christ when my neighbor asked me about my faith.
- I was in a car accident and it was my fault.

Sometimes even minor, silly things seem to weigh a lot. It was my daughter's school picture day, and I completely forgot and sent her in with her hair uncombed, wearing her brother's old sweatshirt.

Maybe you can relate to some of these failures—and add more to the list.

Do any of these examples involve sin issues? Maybe, on some level. Maybe my driving mistake stemmed from a failure to love my neighbor by paying adequate attention to my surroundings. But for the most part, these failures are expressions of weakness rather than sin. I just didn't measure up. It's not so much that I feel guilty when these things happen—it's that I feel like an idiot. We hate being incompetent, letting people down, or even letting ourselves down.

When confronted with the reality of our various failures, the negative narrative in our heads can turn into a deafening roar. The message from the universe—and maybe from God—seems to be *what's the matter with you?*

A slightly different but related question can torment us: *What do you have to show for yourself?* This question tends to surface on milestone birthdays, or at high school reunions, or whenever you find yourself in the company of people you see only occasionally. The sting of the question comes from comparison—measuring yourself against other people who took a different life path, pursued a different