

**What Should I Do with My Life?**  
**Coping with Setbacks and Disappointments**  
**Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17, 3:17-19; 1 Peter 1:3-9**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** Life is full of disappointments, so much so that it is easy to become bitter on the one hand or cynical on the other. One solution is change—either shifting career directions or realigning our deep hopes. But change does not completely solve the problem because brokenness is everywhere and because we bring our own issues with us wherever we go. What does the Bible have to say about life's disappointments and how to face them?

**I) We should expect disappointments**

**A) The point of *Genesis 3:17-19* in the light of *Genesis 2***

- 1) The initial scene
- 2) Disobedience and its aftermath
  - Work has become toil
  - Unintended consequence
  - Work kills us

**B) What does this sad story mean for us?**

- 1) Don't be surprised when things go bad—even if you are a believer
- 2) We do not have grounds for anger at God
- 3) Cynical detachment is inappropriate
  - Grieve
  - Fight

**II) We can meet disappointment with hope**

**A) *1 Peter 1:3-9***

- 1) Peter's tone
- 2) Where it comes from
  - What God has done
  - What God will do
  - Disappointments have purpose

**B) What then do we do with disappointments and setbacks?**

- Look for hope in the right places
- Sing

### Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Life is full of setbacks, disappointments, and failures. List some of the ways that people tend to deal with them? Evaluate each of the ways you listed.
- 2) Genesis 3:17-19 tells us in agricultural terms what we should expect of all work—whether academic, political, parenting, relational, professional, etc. List what Genesis tells us to expect. Recall experiences in which you have encountered what Genesis describes.
- 3) How does Genesis 3:17-19 temper the words of those who tell us that lack of faith is the only reason that Christians do not experience healing or prosperity or answered prayer?
- 4) Many of us bring a sense of entitlement to life, especially if we are Christians struggling to do the right thing. Deep down (sometimes unconsciously) we tend to argue, “God, I have kept my nose clean, I have not been as bad as a lot of other people; so, you owe me a reasonably decent life.” How does Genesis 3:17-19 address this way of thinking? Do you think this is fair?
- 5) Reflect on the following: “The response to hardship that Genesis 3:17-19 calls for is not cynical detachment. It is grief over things lost and forfeited—a grief that pushes against what is wrong in life.” Have you caved in to cynicism or are you pushing against the curse? Give evidence for your answer.
- 6) Read 1 Peter 1:3-9 aloud. How does its tone compare to the tone of Genesis 3:17-19? Peter’s life was full of setbacks and suffering (He lived in the world described by Genesis 3:17-19). How then do we explain the tone of his writing? What reasons do you find for Peter’s tone in Peter’s words?
- 7) 1 Peter 1:6-7 describe the purpose of trials. What is that purpose and why is it important? We tend to look for hope in the wrong place—in a change of circumstances rather than in the purifying of our faith. Where do you see God purifying your faith through trial?
- 8) Read 1 Peter 1:8. Sing a hymn or praise song.