CHANGE OF PLANS: DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

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How many plans have you had to change in the last year? How many disappointments have you had to deal with? In my family, we had to teach and learn from home, lost traditional graduations and celebrations, and canceled a family trip to Italy. You may be dealing with more serious disappointments: the loss of a job, sickness, or even the loss of a loved one. The book of Romans opens to find Paul disappointed (Romans 1:1-17). He desperately wants to go visit the believers in Rome, but other obligations keep popping up that keep him away. He is forced to write a letter instead. But what a letter! Romans has helped Christians define and refine their faith for thousands of years! If Paul had gotten his way and been able to visit the Romans, would we have this deep and theological letter to read today? God's plans are bigger than ours.

Paul's attitude gives us some guidance in dealing with our own disappointment, and to help our children through it as well.

1. Paul starts by connecting to his readers through a reminder of their shared beliefs. Connect with your children through a shared faith experience: pray together, read the Bible, crank up some praise music, attend (virtual) church, or listen to a Kids Corner Bible story.

2. He gives thanks for his readers. Make sure your children know that you love them and are thankful for them. Help them to share that appreciation with distant friends and family.

3. He admits his disappointment. We need to acknowledge our disappointment. We had great plans that are now different and may not seem as good.

4. He notes that he has not been able to do what he wants because he feels obligated by circumstances to other people to whom he is connected. Let's remind our children that our plans have changed because we all need to look out for the safety of other people. Protecting vulnerable people is more important than our plans.

5. He reminds his readers that God's work is continuing even if it's not the way he had hoped. Look for new ways that God could be working in this situation. What opportunities might there be?

Helping children deal with disappointment can be challenging, especially when we are processing uncertainty ourselves. We could even take Paul's solution literally: write a letter! It can be to someone outside your home, or just for your family. Follow the format of Paul's introduction. Letters can last a long time. What a testament to God's faithfulness for the future!

Want to Dig Deeper? Check out Family Fire's article "Navigating Life's Disappointments."

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