

Reason 1: Disappointment with God

Our Daily Bread University
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If it walks like a duck but barks like a dog, you have to wonder if it's a duck. And if a person says they're a Christian but acts like they're not, then you have to wonder if their faith is real.

What about those whose failures or hypocrisy seem to deny the genuineness of their faith? "Faith on Trial: Ten Reasons to Believe Real Christians Can Look Like They're Not," on this *Day of Discovery*.

Many church people seem to be saying with their actions what they would never admit with their mouths.

Dr. Bob Pyne: There's a lot of reasons why people who say they're Christians don't act like it.

Even the expressions on their faces suggest that they are unhappy and bored. Their behavior makes it difficult to believe that their faith gives them any real satisfaction.

Dr. Bob Pyne: Sometimes I think people who say they're Christians but act differently are somehow mad at God.

How can others be expected to trust a God who hasn't lived up to the expectations of His followers? One answer offered by the Bible is that some who claim to be followers of Christ are not authentic. For a while they look genuine. But they are not. The existence of look-alikes, however, is not the whole story. The Bible does not hide the fact that real people of faith also have been disappointed with God . . . And so . . . the first five of Ten Reasons to Believe Real Christians Can Look Like They're Not:

Both Old and New Testaments of the Bible give examples of people of God who were distraught and even angry with God because He allowed them to suffer circumstances they expected Him to protect them from. And what is true of the disappointed

people of the Bible is true today as well.

Dr. Bob Pyne: Not too long ago I surveyed my Sunday school class of young couples. These are people who have just come out of college, a lot of them, and I was about to do a series on Hebrews, which talks about people falling away from the faith. And so I asked them: What is it that makes people fall away from their faith? I was real interested to see what their response was. I had always thought maybe it was intellectual doubts, or running into some atheistic professor, or something like that.

But according to the response, from my class anyway, they said that most of the people who they knew who had abandoned Christianity had abandoned it because they had had some tragic experience or some great disappointment in their life, and it caused them to walk away from God. Almost the idea that they and God had a deal. And when God didn't fulfill the deal, as they expected He would, then they walked away.

[Even one of Jesus' closest friends, Peter, denied he was a disciple after the disappointment of Jesus' arrest (see Luke 22:56–62).]

J. Kirk Johnston [author, *Why Christians Sin*]: A lot of Christians do not articulate that they are disappointed or disillusioned with God. Those are things that they do not want to admit; they don't want to say. They believe that people first of all will look down on them if they say that. And in some cases, they don't want to admit it to themselves. It's very important when we're trying to help someone who is struggling with sin or even help ourselves that we are willing to admit that we are disappointed or disillusioned with God.

Psalm 73:12–16 (NKJV)

Expressing his own disappointment with God, the Old Testament writer of Psalm 73 said:

Behold, these are the ungodly,

Who are always at ease;

They increase in riches.

Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain,

And washed my hands in innocence.

For all day long I have been plagued,

And chastened every morning.

If I had said, "I will speak thus,"

Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

When I thought how to understand this,

It was too painful for me—

Dr. Bob Pyne: There's a lot of reasons why people who say they're Christians don't act like it. Sometimes I think people who say they're Christians but act differently are somehow mad at God. They seem to think that He let them down in some way, and so it's OK for them to let Him down. If He can let me down, then I'll let Him down, and we decide to walk away, to not hold up our end of the deal, because it seems like He didn't hold up His end of the deal. And, the fact is, God doesn't have a lot of deals like that. People expect that He'll provide them a spouse or provide them a job, or provide them whatever. And very often they're trusting in things or looking for things that He hasn't promised. And we can be disappointed when we have our own model of what we think God is or what He should do. That's one of the reasons I think that happens.

Psalm 22:1–2 (NKJV)

Even David, king of Israel, described in the Bible as a man after God's own heart, cried out in disappointment with God:

My God, My God,

why have You forsaken Me?

Why are You so far from helping Me,

And from the words of My groaning?

O My God, I cry in the daytime,

but You do not hear.

J. Kirk Johnston: I sincerely believe that the root cause and the main reason why Christians sin consciously and willfully over significant periods of time is profound disappointment or disillusionment with God. What happens is that a person, a Christian, has an event or situation come into their lives when they can't understand what God is doing. They don't see how God is good or how God is fair.

Ray Stedman: We ought not be surprised that God doesn't act like we think He ought to act. Because He says He's not going to act that way. And one of the ways He tries us is by not moving when we think He ought to move. By delaying interminably, it seems at times, the answer to our prayers. And what we have need of therefore is patience. Waiting on God.

J. Kirk Johnston: And they still believe in God, and they still believe that Christ died for their sins, and they still believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven. They haven't repudiated Him; they haven't denied Him, but they're saying, *God, where are You in all of this? What are You doing?* And they begin to have some doubts about whether God cares about them here and now.

Ray Stedman: And God is constantly teaching us patience. He has announced to us, as Isaiah declares, "My ways are not your ways, My thoughts are not your thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts" (see Isaiah 55:8-9).

J. Kirk Johnston: When a Christian has a situation that disillusiones them, or disappoints them, in relationship to their heavenly Father, they begin to do things they normally wouldn't do. They are vulnerable to temptation in a way that is not the norm. And they fall into all kinds of sin, and they can stay in that sin for a significant period of time until they begin to sort through, with the Spirit's help, with counsel, reading the Word, they begin to sort through where God is in the situation that is disturbing them so greatly.

Ray Stedman: And what we have need of therefore is patience, waiting on God. Now it's the hope that God will act, a hope of course that is a certainty that He will ultimately act that makes possible that patient waiting. Once we lose that hope, we give up waiting. We get impatient, angry, upset at God and everybody

else. And take it out on other people and blame somebody else and so on. So that that endurance of hope is a tremendous theme we need much more to hear about.