



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### The Frustration of Jesus

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John 6

John 6:35 *“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.’”*

The funny thing is, many of us live in a perpetual state of frustration. (Just 6 miles south of hell). Or wherever you are... I get frustrated—aggravated, annoyed, irritated, disturbed, disappointed (lovely bunch of emotions!). Frustrated also means prevented, hindered, blocked, foiled, obstructed and defeated. How much goes on that leaves us feeling defeated, versus how much do our feelings defeat us?

We’ve GOT to look at frustration, because many of us are not experiencing the victory of Christ. (The older I get, the longer the list grows of things I need to be reminded of that I already know.) And at the top of that list may be that Jesus won. He has done everything we need to experience God’s salvation, but still we still have these feelings! And frustration gets me into trouble...

Maybe you get frustrated too. For some people, you feel most frustrated in your relationships. You thought this guy, or this girl, was the one for you. You assumed you were headed in the right direction. And then something happens, and you don’t even know what! And you’re left hindered, hanging on to all these feelings for this other person. And marriage releases it even more. Where else do you pledge the world to each other, in sickness and in health? And when the one you married can’t deliver, what happens? You get frustrated. We assume our spouse is there to meet every one of our needs at any given time. And, when we’re honest, we realize we’re letting our wife or husband down, which gets us frustrated at ourselves. How much frustration comes from dealing with ourselves!

- From saying “This time I won’t give in. This time I’ll be assertive. This time I’ll listen first. This time I’ll do what I said I would do.” And this time comes and goes, same as before.
- How much of our frustration comes from saying yes to too many things? Much of our activity today is little more than a cheap anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life.
- How much of our frustration today comes because we rarely experience the joy of an accomplishment. Proverbs 13:19 *“A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.”* But we have too much to do, so we rush off to the next thing, without finishing anything, let alone the important things.
- How much of our frustration comes from being in debt?
- How much frustration comes from choosing sin? (You may be here one decision away from marital, spiritual, or financial ruin...)
- Some of us sitting in this room are so used to letting ourselves down, we’d rather live with the guilt and frustration than live with the disappointment and frustration of expecting more for ourselves! We don’t even know what it would be like go a day without it!

Frustration is dangerous, because it’s one of those “under the radar” emotions. And it’s hard to let go of.

In a sick sort of way, I’m glad that **Jesus experienced frustration in his life.**

- Jesus’ first recorded words were wrapped in frustration, when he was 12. His whole extended family had been in Jerusalem, and a whole day into the journey home, Mary and Joseph realize they left Jesus at a rest stop awhile

back or somewhere...and they head back, only to find Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem. When they get there and see him, I'm sure they had that "I'm so relieved you're all right/I'm going to ground you big time" look. His mother said to him, "Young man, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you." And Jesus says "Why? You should have known I'd be here, dealing with the things of my Father!"

I can imagine him telling his friends these stories...

- "Mom drives me crazy and I'm trying to be just a guest. I'm trying to, and Mom practically stops the party says "Do whatever he says." And she wants me to turn the water into wine, and it wasn't even time to begin..."
- "You should have seen. I walk on the water...and Peter tries this and starts to sink!..."
- "We're there teaching with like 5,000 people, and nobody brings anything to eat. Duh! So Abba and I have to do the bread in the wilderness thing..."
- So, all these people start saying they believe, but what they really want are just the miracles. Do you know what it's like to have friends just because they want to sort of "use" you?

There are lots more:

- John 14:9 *"Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"*
- Luke 9:41 *"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "How long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."*
- Matthew 12:15 *"Jesus, knowing they were out to get him, moved on. A lot of people followed him, and he healed them all."*

Frustration seems pretty universal. Even Jesus went through it. But as we look over all these incidents, there are a couple things about Jesus we have to note: He didn't act on it, didn't speak out of it, and didn't dwell on it! Even Jesus' frustrated moments are still about God. And where we are placed is where we are to tell about God's unconditional love and his goodness. He didn't act out of it, or speak out of it, or dwell on it. It seems to me, when Jesus was frustrated, he used that emotion to **challenge assumptions**. Remember, every emotion is God's signal...

**Frustration—DON'T act on it!!!! DON'T speak out of it!!! DON'T dwell in it!!**

**Frustration is an assumption problem. When you feel frustrated, challenge assumptions.**

Are your expectations off? Between you and yourself, or you and God, or you and someone else?

- **Frustration is an assumption problem.** For example, we assume life should be easy. And when it's not, we moan, we groan, we blame other people, we go for the escapes—a drink, a smoke, a drug, the TV, the internet, the purchase. And all of that leaves us more frustrated. Because we assume that those things are all okay and won't really hurt us. When Jesus was frustrated, he didn't run from it. He dealt with it. He tried to clear up the false assumption. When the crowd assumed Jesus was their free meal ticket, and wanted more, he said *"27 Don't work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."* He was clearing up the assumption they had that Moses gave their ancestors food, when it was God who did it. They wanted to use Jesus for what they wanted. They had no desire to obey Him. He wanted to challenge that too. Isn't that true of us? (Are any of you in that place today? You've tasted it, but never believed in Him?) We tend to give up. We say "I've got my own version of faith." And we choose not to believe in God, or Christ, because we don't understand.
- **Frustration is an assumption problem.** Especially when we have a hero, or a cause. We pile a lot of assumptions on them. Invariably they let you down. How common was that a source of frustration with Jesus, both then and now? We want to think He's OUR Jesus. We assume we know what He wants and how He acts when it's really how we WANT Him to act and react.
- **Frustration is a signal to check our understanding of reality.** Including our sense of what is "fair." We want God to act like who WE think He should be, rather than the facing the reality that God is beyond our comprehension, and yet has revealed himself to us through his Law, the Prophets, his Son, and now our witness to the world.
- Never allow frustration to be your *motivation* to do or say anything... It should never be acted upon itself. Instead it should be our signal to act, to solve our assumption problem.
- But often, we don't act, **we complain**. We pout. We whine! We love to hear ourselves. We don't seek clarification on the assumption problem. Jesus never did this. Because frustration dwelled upon becomes sin.

**The foothold of frustration is the problem...** Jesus never allowed frustration to gain a foothold. He responded to frustration in a way that led to solutions, to increased communication, to ultimate satisfaction, because he helped people face their assumptions.

**Jesus had an amazingly solution-focused approach to life.** There was always a solution. There were no “problems” for God. In the Gospels Jesus says “nothing is impossible with God” or “all things are possible with God” a total of nine times. Jesus finds solutions for blind people, lepers, demon-possessed Legion, Lazarus in the grave, five thousand hungry listeners and a boat full of disciples on a stormy sea. Whatever the problem there was always a solution and the solution always gave glory to God. The faith of Jesus searched for, found and activated solutions. Just find a solution.

- Avoid the paralysis of analysis. If you puncture the tire on your car with a nail don’t analyze the nail, change the tire.
- Don’t see problems everywhere. Learn to see solutions everywhere.
- Big problems sometimes have really simple solutions. Scurvy was a huge problem among sailors for centuries and the British Admiralty refused to believe that fresh fruit was the solution saying “such a large problem cannot have such a simple solution”. It took the death of one third of the British navy from scurvy in one year and the urging of Captain James Cook to get the Admiralty to see that big problems sometimes have easy solutions.
- Don’t fix the blame – fix the problem.

**Every time of frustration is an opportunity to adjust**—the assumptions of your relationship, your expectations, your communication, your understanding. When he was frustrated, Jesus saw solutions everywhere. He created them. **Your focused mind is the only instrument you have to bring you out of your messy emotions and into life and peace.**

**Some of you are frustrated because you can’t control your emotions and reactions. But let’s examine the assumptions behind your belief, because I believe you *do* have an “OFF” button.** This one’s easy. You’re at home. You’re in a heated argument, you can even be shouting and red-faced in your anger...and the telephone rings. (Do I need to go on?) You pick up the phone and suddenly your voice is calm and rational, you say hello nicely and take the message. In doing so you just took control of your strongest and angriest emotions. You mastered yourself, in a second of time; just in order to answer the phone. You knew how to calm down and you did. You knew how to stop shouting, and you did so. You really are impressive! You do possess the power to instantaneously master strong emotions. You can do so easily and routinely in order to avoid embarrassment. That is the power we call self-control and you do have it.

This week, when you get frustrated, don’t act it out or speak out of it. Instead, check your *assumptions*, and seek a *solution*. Imagine what would happen within ourselves and our relationships if we became a congregation of solution-seekers?

**Some of you are still frustrated because you don’t understand what God is up to. And I close with this story.** She was a frustrated and embittered woman, Charlotte Elliot of Brighton, England. Her health was broken, and her disability had hardened her. “If God loved me,” she muttered, “He would not have treated me this way.”

Hoping to help her, a Swiss minister named Cesear Malan, visited the Elliots on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1822 (just 10 years before Dexter Methodist began). Over dinner, Charlotte lost her temper and railed against God and her family in a violent outburst. Embarrassed, the family left this dining room, and Dr. Malan was left alone with her.

“You’re tired of yourself, aren’t you?” He asked. “You’re holding to your hate and anger because you have nothing else in the world to cling to. Consequently, you have become sour, bitter, and resentful.”

“What is your cure?” asked Charlotte.

“The faith you are trying to despise.”

As they talked, Charlotte softened. “If I wanted to become a Christian, and share the peace and joy you possess,” she finally asked, “What would I do?”

“You would give yourself to God, just as you are now, with your fighting and fears, hates and loves, pride and shame.”

“I would come to God just as I am? Is that right?”

Charlotte did come just as she was, and her heart was changed that day. As time passed, she found and claimed John 6:37 as a special verse for her. "...he who comes to me, I will by no means cast out."

By giving her heart to Christ, Charlotte had brought now had the spiritual capacity to cope with her hardships. Charlotte still struggled sometimes, wondering what she could do to make a difference for Christ. Years later, her brother Rev. Henry Elliot was raising funds for a school for the children of poor clergymen. He wrote a poem, and it was printed and sold across England. Under the title of the leaflet was Charlotte's poem, which has become one of the most famous invitation hymns of all time.

Charlotte lived to be 82 and wrote 150 hymns, even though she was frustrated with ill health. After she died, the family found over 1000 notes written by people to express gratitude for the way the hymn had touched their lives. The first verse goes like this...

"Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me.  
And that Thou bid me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

And today, we have the opportunity to come to the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, and to give Him our frustrations, and all our emotions. So we may put away our assumptions that we need anything more than Him. Won't you come, just as you are?