

# Tidbits

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**Starting a new year leads many of us to pause, reflecting on the one just finished and speculating on the one to come.**

We seem to have a natural tendency to set expectations for ourselves. But rarely does a year look the same in retrospect as it did at its introduction. Some hold exciting successes, others carry deep disappointments, and many have a combination of both. When life doesn't unfold as planned, it is very easy to become discouraged or frustrated. Such emotions are perfectly normal, just as Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Yet there is still a choice in how to respond.

One way to react to unmet expectations is to externalize the responsibility, blaming the circumstances, other people, or even God. While there are certainly factors outside of your control, taking anger out on others can be damaging to relationships and attitude. Taking no responsibility for undesirable outcomes may also allow feelings of helplessness to creep in, contributing to a more negative outlook for the future.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who blame themselves for everything that has gone wrong. Criticizing yourself in areas that were not even within your capacity to control can quickly contribute to a poor self-image and lack of confidence for future actions and decisions. Such a detrimental interpretation of disappointing outcomes is often linked to underlying distorted views of one's worth, both in practical skills and as an individual.

### **So where is the healthy balance?**

How do we respond well to unmet expectations? Often we need to take a step back and try to look at the situation from a more neutral perspective, identifying both circumstances that were not within our control and areas that could have been done better. What mistakes were made are evidence of being human, as everyone is fallible, and these can be seen as excellent opportunities for learning and improvement. At times reconciliation with others in situations of relational tension or hurt is necessary to find closure and prevent bitterness. The good choices and actions of oneself and others in difficult situations should also be recognized, which can be

## Balancing Expectations

quite encouraging. Maintaining a healthy sense of humor is valuable, rather than taking oneself too seriously.

It is also very comforting to have the promise of God's sovereignty. The pieces outside of our control must be surrendered back to God, whether small disappointments or drastic, unexpected events. He has a much bigger picture than we will ever see. Despite being unable to understand why something happens, we can put our trust in him and hold on to eternal hope. As Paul wrote, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:18-19).

If you are at a place of feeling hopeless, don't forget that you are not alone. We are called as the Body of Christ to support one another. At times it is also important to seek professional help, and we seek to provide that at Tumaini, addressing current and past disappointments, challenges, and other areas of concern.

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