

Understanding Expectations

Discussion Notes- February 15, 2026

1. What's something small that recently didn't meet your expectations (a restaurant, movie, event, etc.)?

Expectations often function as invisible, unspoken agreements that can lead to disappointment, hurt, and conflict when they are unmet. Scripture teaches that following Christ requires dying to ourselves daily, surrendering personal demands, and choosing humility over self-centeredness. This applies in marriage and family life, where faithfulness, sacrificial love, and intentional nurturing reflect Christ's heart. But it also extends to all relationships; friendships, church community, and even difficult people, calling believers to lay down pride and serve others with grace. Ultimately, Jesus is the model, showing that true life and healthy relationships grow from humility, self-denial, and a willingness to put others before ourselves.

Read Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Galatians 2:20 shows that following Christ involves a deep surrender of the old self — including our personal desires, demands, and expectations. Many of our expectations come from what we believe we deserve, want, or hope others will give us. But Paul explains that in Christ, our lives are no longer centered on ourselves, because our old identity has been "crucified" with Him. Instead, we now live by trusting Jesus and allowing His love and purposes to shape our priorities. This means that sometimes walking with Christ requires laying down personal expectations in order to love, serve, and live faithfully.

2. How might this verse change the way we think about our expectations in relationships?

Read Ephesians 5:1, 29-33

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God... For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Ephesians 5 begins with a call to imitate God by walking in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. Paul shows that this kind of love is not self-centered but sacrificial, shaping the way we live and relate to others. When he talks about marriage later in the chapter, he uses it as a picture of the gospel. Christ's love for the church is marked by commitment, care, and a willingness to give rather than take. Verses 29–33 emphasize that healthy

relationships require intentional nurturing, not just meeting our own needs. The chapter teaches that unity grows when we lay down our rights, independence, and personal preferences for the good of others. Ultimately, Ephesians 5 reminds us that Christlike love always moves us from self-protection toward self-giving.

3. In what ways can protecting our independence or individuality sometimes hinder unity in relationships?

Read Luke 9:23-24

“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.””

Jesus calls His followers to a daily commitment: “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.” This isn’t a one-time decision, but a continual choice to surrender personal desires, comfort, and control. Verse 24 reminds us that true life comes through this surrender. When we let go of ourselves, we gain the abundant life Jesus offers. In other words, following Christ often looks like giving up what we *think we need or want* in order to embrace what God knows is best. This passage shows that dying to self is not just about sacrifice; it’s about entering into the fullness of life and purpose in Him. Dying to self daily means choosing faithfulness over personal fulfillment.

4. What helps you remember to do this in your relationships, at work, or even in small daily decisions? How might your approach be different from someone else’s, and what can we learn from each other?”

Read Philippians 2:3-8

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

This passage reminds us that dying to self and laying down personal desires is not just for marriage or family, but for *all* our relationships- friends, coworkers, neighbors, and even strangers. True unity and fruitfulness flow when we follow Christ’s example of humility and sacrificial love. Just as Jesus gave Himself fully, we are called to daily choose faithfulness over personal fulfillment, caring for others above ourselves.

5. This week, what is one way you can put someone else’s needs or perspective above your own, and how will you remember to do it each day?

Prayer/Closing:

- Pray for a humble heart that seeks to serve others daily.
- Pray for strength to lay down personal desires and expectations.
- Pray for Christlike love to guide all our relationships.

Deeper Dive: Following Jesus' Example in Humility and Grace

We all hold expectations about people, relationships, outcomes, and life in general. Often these expectations are unrealistic or unmet, and our natural response is frustration, anger, or withdrawal. Yet Jesus provides the ultimate model: He knew people would misunderstand Him, betray Him, and even reject Him, but He chose humility, obedience, and sacrificial love anyway. This teaches us that we cannot base how we treat others on whether our expectations are met.

Read Philippians 2:1-11

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Paul wrote the letter to the church in Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia, around AD 61–62 while he was imprisoned. He was writing to encourage the believers to live in unity and humility, warning them against selfish ambition, divisions, and self-centered attitudes that were threatening the community.

In Philippians 2, Paul shifts from exhortation (verses 1–4) to a powerful example: Jesus Christ Himself. He moves from command to example because it's one thing to say “be humble,” but it's far more compelling to show how humility looks in the life of the Son of God.

Read Matthew 26:31-41

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.’ Peter answered him, ‘Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!’ And all the disciples said the same. Then Jesus went with them to a place called

Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

In Matthew 26:31–41, Jesus faces one of the most intense moments of His earthly ministry: the night before His crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows His disciples will fail Him, Peter will deny Him, and the others will scatter but He still entrusts them with His mission and guides them in prayer. This passage highlights Jesus' awareness of human weakness and unmet expectations. He does not respond with anger or disappointment but models humility, patience, and dependence on the Father.

Both Philippians 2:1–11 and Matthew 26:31–41 show us that Jesus fully understood human weakness and the ways people often fall short of expectations, yet He chose humility and obedience for our sake. In Philippians, Paul points to Jesus' self-emptying love and obedience to the cross as the ultimate model for our lives. In Matthew, we see this in real time as Jesus predicts His disciples' failure yet still lovingly guides and intercedes for them. Together, these passages remind us that following Christ means laying down our rights, letting go of unmet expectations, and responding with grace, service, and humility, even when others disappoint us. Jesus' example shows that true strength is found not in asserting ourselves but in surrendering for the good of others.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does seeing Jesus predict His disciples' failure change the way you think about unmet expectations in your own relationships?
2. In what ways does Jesus' humility and self-emptying in Philippians 2 challenge the way we normally respond when people disappoint us?
3. How can we practically follow Jesus' example of grace and service, even when others fall short of what we hope or expect from them?