

Managing Expectations

"You Make Me Crazy" series- Part 05

Connect: Share with the group a "surprise" that you experienced this week.

Hook: Read out loud the following passage and discuss it afterwards with the questions below:

"What's the first sign of a lurking, hidden expectation you didn't know you had? Pain! People don't do what we want, things don't happen quickly enough, the weather doesn't cooperate, our bodies don't cooperate. Why are these moments so painful? Because our minds are focused on a static, unchanging, me-centric picture while the dynamic unfolding of a broader life continues around us. There is nothing wrong with expectations per se, as it's appropriate to set goals and work, properly, towards their fruition. But the instant we feel pain over life not going "my way," our expectations have clearly taken an improper turn. Any moment you feel resistance or pain, look for -- and then let go of -- the hidden expectation. Practice giving yourself over to what "you" don't want. Let the line at the store be long. Let the other person interrupt you. Let the nervousness make you shake. Be where your body is, not where your mind is trying to take you." — Guy Finley

1. What part of this quote do you strongly agree with?
2. Any disagreements? Why?
3. How do you feel about "giving yourself to what you don't want"?

Book: Genesis 24:1-9

Gen 24:1 Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way.

Gen 24:2 One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, "Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh.

Gen 24:3 Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women.

Gen 24:4 Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

Gen 24:5 The servant asked, "But what if I can't find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?"

Gen 24:6 "No!" Abraham responded. "Be careful never to take my son there.

Gen 24:7 For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants. He will send His angel ahead of you, and He will see to it that you find a wife there for my son.

Gen 24:8 If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there."

Gen 24:9 So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham's instructions.

Look:

When expectations are poorly managed, four negative emotions emerge, any one of which can be destructive in any relationship. They are the emotions of: Anger, Sadness, Anxiety, and Shame.

Why might Abraham's servant experience any or all of these emotions if he came back home without a wife for Isaac?

It is important that we do well in managing expectations so they do not lead to defeating emotions. Please note how Abraham managed his own expectations and in turned, greatly assisted his servant in his task.

1. Abraham was CLEAR in what his expectations were. What kind of wife did he want for his son?
2. Abraham was presented an alternative expectation by the servant. How did Abraham deal with the suggested expectation?
3. How did Abraham negotiate with his servant so that he could proceed with confidence?

As time will allow, discuss the following questions to provide helpful suggestions:

-How can you initiate a discussion on expectations?

-How can we initiate a discussion on expectations with a person who isn't ready to express, discuss, negotiate?

-How do you negotiate with a person who is in a position of authority or power over you?

-How do you handle unfulfilled expectations?

-What unrealistic expectations are you struggling with today?

-Discuss together some realistic expectations of God, followers of Christ can have. Then, discuss some of our unrealistic expectations.