

The Expectation Trap

Small Group Guide

Warm-up Questions:

1. What's the most unexpected or "unique" gift you've ever received, and did you end up loving it or re-gifting it?
2. If you had to live one day with everything going *exactly* as planned or one day of unexpected adventures and surprises, which would you choose and why?

Key Passages: Luke 1:8-13, 18-20; Luke 1:28-29, 34-38; Matthew 1:20-21; Ruth 1:16-17; 2:3-4; 4:13-17

Life often confronts us with unmet expectations and unexpected disruptions that challenge our faith and reshape our plans. In Luke 1, Zechariah and Elizabeth's long season of waiting reminds us that God's silence is not absence. It's preparation for a greater purpose. Mary and Joseph's story shows that God's plans often come wrapped in disruption, challenging us to trust Him even when the path is unclear. Naomi's journey in Ruth reveals how God's redemptive work can emerge from the ashes of disappointment, crafting a story far greater than we imagined. These accounts encourage us to release our expectations, embrace divine disruptions, and trust that God's plans, though often different from our own, are always better. Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

Facing Assumptions

1. **How have your assumptions about how God should show up affected your ability to see Him in unexpected ways?** Consider the example of the Jewish people missing the Messiah because He didn't meet their expectations. What might you be overlooking in your own life because it doesn't match the picture you've imagined?
2. **Have you ever felt like your prayers were unheard or forgotten by God?** How does the assurance in Luke 1:13, that "your prayer HAS been heard," encourage you to trust God's faithfulness even when the silence feels overwhelming?
3. **What unmet expectations have you been silently carrying, and how have they shaped your view of God and His faithfulness?** Consider Zechariah's story in Luke 1:5-7. how might God be using the silence to prepare you for something greater?

4. **Reflect on the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Are you waiting on something from God, yet feel frustrated by the delay?** What steps can you take to trust His timing and allow Him to prepare you for the blessing, rather than rushing ahead of His plan?
5. **Reflect on 1 Thessalonians 5:18 & 1 Peter 5:6. Where in your life are you struggling to trust God's timing over your own?** How might surrendering control and practicing gratitude in the waiting transform your perspective?

Embracing Disruption

6. **Read Luke 1:38.** What areas of your life require a similar surrender to God's plans over your own? What fears or desires make it hard for you to say, "May Your word to me be fulfilled," and how might those fears be keeping you from experiencing His greater purpose?
7. **Read Acts 9:3-9, where Paul's encounter with God disrupts his plans but redirects him toward a greater purpose.** How might God be using a disruption in your life to shift you toward His greater calling?
8. **How do you typically respond when your plans are interrupted? Do you resist, withdraw, or seek God's purpose in the disruption?** (Consider Mary's surrender in Luke 1:38 and how her faith enabled her to embrace God's plan.)
9. What might it look like for you to move from asking, "Why is this happening to me?" to, "God, what are You trying to teach me through this?" (*Draw inspiration from reflection on Mary and Joseph's obedience, even without knowing the full plan.*)
10. **Read Genesis 50:20, where Joseph acknowledges God's hand in turning disruption into redemption.** What is one area in your life where you've struggled to see God's purpose, and how might you reframe it as part of His greater story?

Pray