



Week 1
Discipleship Study
Questions



Not So Great Expectations

As we step into a new year, many of us carry quiet longings—prayers we’re still waiting on, hopes that feel delayed, places in our stories that haven’t turned out the way we imagined. The writer of Proverbs captures this honestly: **“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”**

If you’ve ever felt the ache of disappointment or the weariness of waiting, you’re not alone. God sees the longings of your heart, and He cares deeply about the places where your hope has grown thin.

This series, Not So Great Expectations, is an invitation to bring those longings into the light. Together, we will explore the expectations we carry in relationships, in life, and even in our faith—and the ways those expectations can sometimes drain our hearts. More importantly, we’ll look to the One who meets us in that ache with gentleness and grace.

Our prayer for this series is simple: **That you would trade what drains you for the hope that sustains you.**

Wherever you find yourself today—waiting, longing, discouraged, grateful—may you encounter the God who turns deferred hope into new life. He is closer than you think, and He is faithful.

Read the Scripture:

Individual: Read the passage from two or three different translations.

Group: Have two different group members read the passage using different Bible translations.

Speak the Scripture:

Individual: Recite the story aloud from memory (as best you can) or tell it to a friend or family member. The goal here is to get the essence of the passage in your heart.

Group: Have someone volunteer to recite the passage aloud in their own words, as best they can.

Understand the Scripture:

Individual or Group: Use the Discovery Questions to help ensure you understand the passage.

Dig Deeper into the Scripture:

Individual: Work through the Digging Deeper questions and pray about what God reveals to you through His word. Discuss with a Christian friend or family member if you choose.

Group: Work through the Digging Deeper questions as a group, celebrating the work God is already doing in each person’s life, and encouraging each other to trust Him in the places that need growth.

Small Group Guidelines

This is a Safe Group

Confidentiality is key—what is said in the group stays in the group. Be aware of how you are affecting the environment with your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. This needs to be a place where people feel comfortable opening up and sharing.

No Crosstalk

Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations, phone time, texting etc.

Listen

Let's value one another by listening to what is being shared. Allow a pause after someone shares to allow them to finish and others to consider what was said. Eye contact and body posture play key roles in creating a positive or negative group environment.

No Rescuing or Fixing

We are not here to fix each other; Jesus does that part. Avoid the tendency to rescue when someone is struggling to get the words out or shares a struggle or conviction.

Use "I" Statements

It's easy to talk about the issues of others, or respond with "we," "us," or "the church," but for us to grow as disciples and build relationships, we want to use "I" statements.

Don't Over-Talk

We want to create time for all members of the group to participate in the discussion. Be careful not to always be the first responder or regularly give long responses.

Fight for Relationship

It's not if conflict or hurt feelings will happen, but when. We commit to fight for relationship with each other. Go to the person and share your struggle or seek wise advice if you are not sure how to handle the conflict.

Week 1

Background: Most of us carry expectations for how life and relationships should work. When those expectations go unmet, disappointment can quietly turn into pressure and conflict. In James 4, we're invited to look beneath the surface and learn how to bring our longings to God with humility, honesty, and trust.

Read: James 4:1-10

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What do we learn about what it means to be a follower of Christ in this passage?

What do you think the Holy Spirit might be teaching you personally through this passage?

Is there anything God is leading you to do after reading this passage?

Digging Deeper:

According to James, where do fights and quarrels ultimately come from?

What words does James use to describe what's happening **inside** a person before conflict shows up **between** people?

What stands out to you about how James connects unmet desires with conflict?

What do you notice about God's posture toward the humble in this passage?

How does James describe humility differently than simply "trying harder" or "lowering expectations"?

What feels difficult—or even uncomfortable—about the invitation to grieve, mourn, or lament before God?

End this time with a prayer.

Heavenly Father, each of us can name in our hearts a relationship that did not turn out as we had hoped, or where we felt disappointed, let down, or betrayed. We name before you what we wanted and where it hurts, and we release these outcomes to you. We know that You have the power to comfort, heal, and restore us. Only in Jesus do we find what will never let us down. In Jesus' name, Amen.