

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
WEEK ONE: CROWDED EXPECTATIONS
NO VACANCY



Crowded Expectations

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear Loving God, open our hearts, minds and souls to hear from you today. Help us to support each other with our words and deeds. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen!

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

How have you seen God at work in your life this week?
What good have you done for someone else this week?

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Read Micah 5:2

“But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.”

REFLECTION:

Most of us have made plans for the Christmas season. Some of us have very detailed plans including what will be served for dinner, a guest list, items to be purchased and given away as presents, an itinerary of places to visit (such as Christmas parties), Christmas light displays in places such as Interlochen in Arlington or a Christmas tree lighting in Southlake Town Square. The rest of us may only have a general idea of what we will be doing. It does not matter if we have detailed plans or a general idea, we all have expectations. Often, when our experience of anything (including Christmas) does not meet our expectations, we become disappointed and frustrated. In those times, we should take a step back and ask ourselves, “why do I have this set of expectations? Who said things have to unfold exactly the way that I expected?” Could it be that, at times, we allow our disappointment to rob us of an opportunity to experience something new?

The Jews longed for the messiah, the chosen one and anointed king, to deliver them from the oppression of their enemies. The Jews expected their messiah to be a great king and military leader who would ride on a war horse, vanquish their foes and make their name great among the nations. They based their expectations on what they had already experienced in their history as a people. Preceding the monarchy,

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WEEK TWO

NO VACANCY

God sent judges who delivered the people from the hands of their enemies. After the monarchy was established, God gave great military victories to Saul, followed by David. Since God promised that the messiah would come from the line of David, people expected that the promised Messiah would be a great warrior like David.

The messiah came to us in a stable, not in a palace. The messiah rode on a donkey, not a war horse. Many of the people expected the messiah to wage war against Rome, expelling the Romans from their land. However, Jesus came to set us free from the captivity of sin. Jesus' mission was larger than one nation or group of people. He came to set all of humanity free, which included the Romans. Jesus established his kingdom in the hearts of humanity because a change in the human heart leads to a change in how we relate to each other and to God's creation. This change is for the better because it enables us to fully love God, love our neighbors as ourselves and fulfill our original purpose of caring for God's creation. By living in this way, we help usher in the consummation of all things as we await Jesus' second coming. By knowing this truth and living with this hope, we can joyfully endure any suffering because it is only temporary. We choose to believe the promise that we will live eternally with God. The Jews did not get the messiah they were expecting but all of humanity got the Messiah that we needed.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter the Head:

In your own words, define messiah. How did the Jews form their expectations of the messiah?

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What was the most impactful thing that you learned from sermon, podcast/videos, and from the sermon discussion guide?

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Is it possible to sometimes set unrealistic expectations? If so, how do we set realistic expectations while not accepting mediocracy or subpar performance.

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Encounter the Heart:

What are your expectations of the Messiah; what are you hoping that Jesus will do for you personally?

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Share a time when your expectations were not met, nevertheless you were pleasantly surprised with the outcome.

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GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Share what helps you overcome your disappointment when expectations are not met.

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Encounter the Hands:

Write down your prayer concerns and celebrations. Now share them with the group.

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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