

CONNECT GROUP NOTES

ESCAPING THE CAPTIVITY OF DOUBT

OUTLOOK CHURCH



FOR THE FACILITATOR

Encourage the group to take turns reading and answering questions

You will be asked questions on the topic . You open the question to the group as you reach each question .

TOPIC : ESCAPING THE CAPTIVITY OF DOUBT

Sermon audio: outlookchurch.co.za/sermons/320

READER 1

Whether we like it or not as humans we all have expectations.

We have expectations of ourselves, of those we love, of what we expect in a job. We all have many expectations. The problem with expectations is that they are often unmet.

Question #1: Think of an example in your life when you had an expectation that went unmet. How did it make you feel?

As Christians we can have the expectations that coming to Jesus will mean a life free of problems, but this is not something that the Bible ever tells us.

The problem with the gap between reality and expectations is it can create doubt. And we don't want to live in doubt.

Let's look at some examples from the Bible where expectations were unmet. If we look at John the Baptist, his expectation of Jesus was different to the way Jesus revealed himself. He knew Jesus was the Christ, as such he sent His disciples to Jesus for clarity.

What was John's expectation of Jesus?

Matthew 3:11-12 (NIV)

¹¹“I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his **threshing floor**, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

READER 2

John’s expectation was Judgement, not Mercy. Jesus is supposed to be The Great Judge that would come and judge all deserving. Where was this expectation coming from?

Genesis 3:15

¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

This was a prophecy about Jesus saying that he would come and crush the head of the enemy and condemn what was sinful. This was the expectation of Jesus, but what did Jesus really do?

- Healed the sick and the lepers
- Taught people (Sermon on the mount)
- Showed compassion
- Calmed the storm for His disciples
- Forgave sin
- Raised the dead to life

- Functioned as an agent of Mercy

EXPECTATION – To burn up the chaff and judge the sinful

REALITY – Brought compassion, and forgave sin

John was in prison hearing all these amazing things Jesus was doing while He awaited death in Jail. Surely John was expecting Jesus to come and save him, but that didn't happen.

The gap between expectation and reality is called disappointment which leads to doubt. This doubt led to John questioning Jesus. John must have been under emotional, physical, mental and spiritual stress.

John had announced the coming of the Messiah, but now He himself had been languishing in prison for months, and the work of Jesus had not brought the results John had expected His disappointment was natural. He wanted reassurance.

“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

When we are experiencing disappointment we often question if we made a mistake and were wrong in our expectations.

Question 2: Have your unmet expectations lead to doubts or to questioning your faith?

READER 3

How does Jesus address the gap?

John 8:31-32

³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Jesus knows there is a gap for us as believers, but he also knows when we focus on His Word, His way, we will be spared the doubt. So how do we do this? We hold onto his teaching. Then we will know the truth that will set us free from our doubts.

Let’s look at how Jesus responds to John:

Luke 7:22

²²Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

Jesus responds with encouragement to see what God's hand is doing rather than to look at the circumstances.

Jesus quoted the Prophet Isaiah's words. He is reminding John that what you see and what you hear is what the Messiah was prophesied to do. Jesus knows very well that John understood scripture and he pointed John back to scripture to reassure him.

Jesus does the same with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus He points to scripture.

Luke 24:17-27(NIV)

¹⁷He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹"What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel....

²⁵He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Question 3: When you are stuck in the captivity of doubt, how do you get out of it ?

In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord

Psalms 77: 7 – 12

⁷“Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favour again?

⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for

all time? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” ¹⁰ Then I thought, “To this I will appeal:

the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. ¹¹ I will

remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

¹² I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”

Truth helps us escape the captivity of doubt. The captivity of sin/ captivity of bondage.

²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Hold on to Jesus the living Word, hold on to teachings about Him.

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Naturally we avoid what causes us disappointment. We need to realise that Expectations of people and ourselves will always lead to disappointment. Realise that His ways are not our ways.

Expectation about the character of God will never disappoint. He will never disappoint us. His character is unchanging. He is Love. He is Life. He is hope.

Take your thoughts to the LORD, He won't chase you away!

If we look at the story of the Prodigal Son. Look at how the Father dealt with both sons. Both had faults, but the father was still a father to both.

He went out with open arms to the Prodigal son and he also went to His first born son and invited him into the celebration. We too can know that our Heavenly Father no matter what we have done or how we may feel, worthy or unworthy. His heart for us is one of love.

Just like with the Thief on the cross – It's never too late. Don't get stuck in the captivity of doubt – Let the truth, which is Jesus, set you free.

Question 4: What would the church look like if we all caught this understanding?

SHARE YOUR HIGHLIGHT

Take turns sharing what stood out to you the most from what we read and why?

ACTION STEP

What action step can you take in order for you to escape the captivity?

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