

Small Group Ministry
Group Session Plan
Expectations

Prepare Grab Bags for participants. Directions at end of session.

Opening Words:

God give us rain when we expect sun.
Give us music when we expect trouble.
Give us tears when we expect breakfast.
Give us dreams when we expect a storm.
Give us a stray dog when we expect congratulations.
God play with us, turn us sideways and around.

— Michael Leunig

Check-In/Sharing

Topic:

We all know the common mantra: "You get what you expect." That, most certainly, is part of what it means to be a people of expectation from an UU perspective. We believe that human beings have tremendous power to shape and create their own experience.

If you expect people to be good, you will discover and notice goodness.

If you believe life is on your side, you will see opportunities unfold over and over again.

This form of relating to expectation is about reminding ourselves that we have control. It's about noticing we have options. It's about taking hold of the situation and putting our stamp on it.

And yet there are also moments when letting the situation take hold of us is good for the soul. Sometimes holding too tightly to our desired expectations leaves us blind. Sometimes getting what we expect leads to expecting to always get what we want. Sometimes the most important question is not "Are you ready to take control of the reality in front of you?" but instead "Are you willing to let go of expectation and be led by the unknown?"

Activity: Grab Bag. Reflect on the bag.

What feelings does the bag bring up for you? What do you expect to be in the bag? Unpack the bag, slowly (either one person at a time, or all together)

Your reaction? Your response? Your reflection?

Questions:

1. How do expectations influence relationships?
2. What expectations do you need to let go?
3. What are the sources of your expectations?
4. What happens to you when the outcome is different from what you expect?

Check-out/Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you?

Closing Words: Unexpected (excerpt. full poem: htivittinvurl.com/og2mgz)

And the baby!

Whoever expected a baby?

Whoever expected the advent of God in a helpless child?

Had the Messiah arrived in the blazing light of the glory
of a legion of angels wielding golden swords,

the whole world could have been conquered for Christ
right then and there

and we in the church - to say nothing of the world! -
wouldn't have so much trouble today.

Even now we simply do not expect

to face the world armed with love.

— "Kneeling in Bethlehem" by Ann Weem

(full poem: <http://tinyurl.com/og2mgz>)

Preparing Grab Bags:

Note: In order for the facilitator to fully participate in this experience, have someone outside of the group prepare the bag.

Prepare small bag for each participant so that the contents are not discernable, except for the wrapping paper/tissue paper.

Purpose: Experience the unknown, the way we approach it and the expectations that arise.

Have about 5 items. Content can range from:

Nothing but the wrapping paper.

Or wrapping paper with some parts empty and some with small items (like a penny)

Pieces of paper with words of compliment or challenge, gratitude or saying.

Have similar types of items in each bag, although the items may vary. Use your imagination and have fun.

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