

expectation



LIVING
AS
CHILDREN
OF
PROMISE



Expectation:

Living as Children of Promise

A Community Groups Study
of Crossline Church

table of contents

PROLOGUE	4
A WORD TO HOSTS/LEADERS	5
HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY	6
INTRODUCTION	7
SESSION 1	8
SESSION 2	10
SESSION 3	14
SESSION 4	18
SESSION 5	22
INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT GROUP	25
COMMITMENT CONTRACT	27
HOW TO ACCESS RIGHTNOW MEDIA	28
OTHER CROSSLINE GROUP RESOURCES	29
ABOUT THE EDITOR	33
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH INFO	34

prologue

A fellowship of men and women sit around the table, the kids are playing in the living room, and dad is already asleep in the corner after a long day. There are others behind the door to the right, joined together for the most sacred of times. The room is full of the aroma of fresh-baked bread and the sounds of laughter and conversation. This is family. Family like I have never experienced. All I know is that everyone was brought together because of him.

It has been a week since he left, yet it feels like he is still with us. This community is so alive, just like him. He told us to wait and stay and so that is what we have been doing. He said that something incredible would happen, something miraculous, and he sealed it with a promise. Then, right before our eyes, the heavens opened, and he ascended into the clouds.

We, as his followers, live in expectation. It's this expectation of His divine presence being made known among us that unifies us. Sure, waiting is hard sometimes, but he has opened our minds to understand the scriptures and trust his promises. He is faithful --always has been and always will be. So, in the spaces in between, we remain committed to prayer and fellowship. We speak truth to one another. These practices are the cure to feeling antsy or discouraged as we wait.

So patient, prayerful expectation is our posture until we see his power which he promised. We are children of the living God because of him.

We are children of promise.

a word to hosts/ leaders of the group

Starting this 5-week community group study, you likely have a wide variety of emotions going through your head and your heart right now. Some of you are beyond excited and rejoicing that this study is finally here. You have been looking up new dessert recipes, printed out custom prayer request charts, and already comprised your email and text distribution lists for the group! Some of you may be terrified, and you are questioning why in the world you've decided to do this. Wherever you are now, allow us to share one thing we know with great confidence—**you and your group will be blessed because you stepped out in faith!**

We have a specific encouragement for you: YOU CAN DO THIS! Our enemy, the devil, would want you to believe that you can't or that you should be afraid, but God is with you, and He has great plans for you and each person in your group! That Bible states that "[You] can do all things through Christ who strengthens [you]" (Philippians 4:13). The Lord proclaims over you, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In addition, you are not alone. Take full advantage of the Church that God has put around you. Reach out to fellow hosts, key volunteers, leaders, or church staff. We all want to come alongside you and help you be successful! Don't try to do this in isolation, but instead link arms with your brothers and sisters!

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you as you host and shepherd the group of people God has entrusted to you! Blessings!

how to get the most out of this study

1. First of all, the best way to get the most out of this study is ENGAGE. Come to your community group ready to listen and ready to discuss! Bring your Bible or a device with the Bible on it, along with something to take notes. If you are distracted or closed off, we can guarantee that this experience won't be all that it can be for you.
2. Secondly, make an intentional effort to do the *APPLY* exercises for each week. Each of these exercises put the teaching for that week into practice. By participating, you are not only driving the wisdom received into your mind and heart but you likely will be blessed and blessing others.
3. Thirdly, come as you are and don't let this study burden you! This workbook is to be a refreshing, thought-provoking, easy-to-use aid for discussion and study. Don't be afraid to ask questions!

introduction

Welcome to Expectation: Living as Children of Promise, a 5-session small groups curriculum from Crossline Community Church. Although you can do this curriculum individually, it is best in the context of a small group of people. We pray that this content will bless you and assist you in your process of discipleship.

In Expectation, we will have the chance to dive into the Bible and explore the truths from the book of Acts, Chapter 1. When one decides to become a follower of Jesus, they are born into a new covenant, and all of the very great and precious promises from Jesus become theirs. Great promises produce great expectations. Throughout this study, as you look at the example of the disciples in the time between Jesus' ascension up to heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, you will discover a posture of life that followers of Jesus can take on when they are patiently seeking the fulfillment of God's promises.

In addition to the written content in this booklet, videos accompany each session and can be accessed by... _____

PART 1 OF A SERIES OF CURRICULA on ACTS 1-4

If you enjoy this study, we want to encourage you to continue with the other studies that are a part of this series. Part 2 picks up where expectation leaves off and is called Outpouring: Unleashed with Holy Spirit Power. It focuses on Acts, Chapter 2. The final installment is called Advancement: Moving and Authority and Confidence and focuses on Acts Chapters 3-4. All of these studies will be uniform in format and produced by Crossline Community Church.

session 1

OPEN MINDS (LUKE 24:45)

When one comes to an understanding of the integrity of the scriptures and especially Jesus' words, it is life-altering. It is a foundational part of living as a child of promise. Life has a new compass. All decisions, passions, plans, and expectations hinge on this knowledge of the truth. Suddenly you are compelled to act and behave within the conviction that every promise of the scriptures is trustworthy. Do you believe the Bible? Do you believe that the letters you read upon the pages are the authoritative, truthful, inspired Word of God? How would your life answer that question? Allow Jesus to open your mind to understand the scriptures and start living life from that conviction.

Before we can step into a posture of expectancy, we must know what we are expectant for, and Jesus himself will assist us in the process of discovering that if we seek Him with all our heart.

START BY WATCHING THE VIDEO FOR EXPECTATION: SESSION 1

1. Go to crosslinechurch.com/expectation
2. Click "View Video"
3. Click "Watch Now" to view on the Crossline website, or follow the instructions to view on RightNow media

READ

Open your bible and read the following scriptures aloud as a group, taking a moment between each scripture to make some quick observations.

Luke 24:45-48

Mark 4:10-13 & 21-25

Colossians 2:1-3

1 Corinthians 1:18-24

1 Corinthians 4:1

DISCUSS

1. Based on what you just read, how do we come to understand scripture?
2. Why is it important to understand scripture?
3. What do you think keeps people from understanding scripture?
4. What effect would having the “full riches of complete understanding” have on your life?

APPLY

On a piece of paper or in your journal, write down one thing about the Bible, Jesus, or the Christian faith that you would like to have a greater depth of understanding about. Then, every day this week, take a moment to pray that the Holy Spirit would teach you more about that thing.

session 2

PATIENT FEET (ACTS 1:4-5, LUKE 24:49)

One of the most visible outward signs of trust is patience. When we trust God, His Word, and His promises, we are patient to allow Him to lead. We trust His timing, and we trust that He knows what is best. Unfortunately, so many of us aren't patient enough to wait on God, and we find ourselves making decisions and living out our plans isolated from God. Whereas it would have been tempting for the disciples (especially Peter!) to act impulsively after seeing Jesus rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, Jesus' directions were to wait to stay until they "were clothed with power from His Holy Spirit." Do you trust Jesus enough to follow His leadership? Even when it's not in your timing? Waiting can be a holy practice. Practicing restraint can be sanctifying. Staying with Jesus can be the thing that makes you more like Him.

Being expectant means being patient. The disciple settled in the posture of expectancy has a demeanor that is confident and unwavering. He does not jump the gun or take matters into his own hands. Neither is the disciple lazy. She is ever-prepared and equipped.

START BY WATCHING THE VIDEO FOR EXPECTATION: SESSION 2

1. Go to crosslinechurch.com/expectation
2. Click "View Video"
3. Click "Watch Now" to view on the Crossline website, or follow the instructions to view on RightNow media

READ

Open your bible and read the following scriptures aloud as a group, taking a moment between each scripture to make some quick observations.

Acts 1:1-5

Luke 24:49

Psalms 25:4-5

Habakkuk 2:1-3

Deuteronomy 31:8

2 Peter 3:1-9

DISCUSS

1. Why did Jesus tell his disciples to wait and stay in the city of Jerusalem after his ascension to heaven?
2. Why do you think it is hard to be patient?
3. How can understanding the character of the Lord assist us in being patient?
4. Is it easy or difficult for you to believe that God has a perfectly appointed time for the events of your life? Why or why not?
5. Read 2 Peter 3:8-9 again. What does God's patience mean to you, personally?

REFLECT

In the last session, you were challenged to write down one thing about the Bible, Jesus, or the Christian faith that you would like to have a greater depth of understanding about and then pray about it every day. Did anything happen as a result?

APPLY

One day this week, take some time to think of an incredibly significant moment in your life. Then, pray that God would show you why it happened when it did. Write down some of the reasons why you think God orchestrated that moment in that time.

Then take a moment to pray and ask God to help you trust His timing for the events of your future.

session 3

VISIONARY EYES (ACTS 1:8)

The Apostle Paul reminded first-century believers in Romans 8:37 that through Christ, they were “more than conquerors.” In an age very familiar with conquerors, this truth statement instills confidence and boldness. It gives them a more accurate vision of their identity in Christ and what they were capable of through Christ. Jesus’ words to the disciples in Acts 1:8 gave them a great vision for what they were called to be: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth...” Having that promise planted in their mind, they were ready and full of anticipation when the Holy Spirit did, in fact, come with power. Likewise, knowing the promises of God’s Word ought to fill us with anticipation, passion, and preparedness for both the present and the future.

START BY WATCHING THE VIDEO FOR EXPECTATION: SESSION 3

1. Go to crosslinechurch.com/expectation
2. Click “View Video”
3. Click “Watch Now” to view on the Crossline website, or follow the instructions to view on RightNow media

READ

Open your bible and read the following scriptures aloud as a group, taking a moment between each scripture to make some quick observations.

Acts 1:6-8

John 14:12-14

Mark 16:15-18

Matthew 16:18-19

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

DISCUSS

1. What do these passages teach us about the identity of the disciple of Jesus?
2. Why do you think Jesus told his disciples what he said in Acts 1:8 before he ascended into heaven and after what he said in Acts 1:4-7?
3. How would complete confidence in the identity statements from these passages change the way you live your life?
4. How does having a vision from Jesus fuel a posture of expectation?
5. What are some of the specific ways you believe Jesus wants to use you as His witness?

REFLECT

Did you have time this last week to reflect on a significant moment in your life and see how God's timing was at work? Share with the group.

APPLY

Pray and ask God to use one of your gifts/skills for His purpose this week. Be on the lookout for those opportunities and seize the moment!

session 4

PRAYERFUL HEARTS (ACTS 1:13-14)

Continually, always, at all times, constantly --these are some of the words scripture uses to guide believers on when and how they should pray. The message is clear: no spiritual practice in our lives ought to be more present than prayer. After the disciples watched Jesus ascend to heaven in Acts 1:9, aware of the command that He gave them to wait in Jerusalem, they remained in expectation in the best way possible—they got together and prayed. Prayer is something that must be active in the believer's personal life and relationally with others. Furthermore, prayer and a posture of expectation go hand in hand. Jesus said in Mark 11:24 that when we pray, we ought to "believe that [we] have received it." In response to the faith that you have in Jesus and His promises, are you praying regularly on your own and with others? Are you confident that God hears your prayers, and are you expectant that He will respond to them? Perhaps it is time to activate your prayer life and see how God moves.

START BY WATCHING THE VIDEO FOR EXPECTATION: SESSION 4

1. Go to crosslinechurch.com/expectation
2. Click "View Video"
3. Click "Watch Now" to view on the Crossline website, or follow the instructions to view on RightNow media

READ

Open your Bibles and read the following scriptures aloud as a group, taking a moment between each scripture to make some quick observations.

Acts 1:9-14

Colossians 4:2

Philippians 4:6

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1 John 5:14-15

Mark 11:22-25

DISCUSS

1. What do these passages teach us about the practice of prayer?
2. In light of Philippians 4:6, how does prayer combat anxiety?
3. Is praying consistently difficult for you? What are the things that keep you from praying?
4. Why do you think it is important to pray with other believers?

REFLECT

Did God present an opportunity for you to use one of your gifts/skills for his purposes this last week? How did that go?

APPLY

Whether you do this in your group meeting time or through a group text/email, share a “mountain” you need moved in your life with your group. This could be a struggle you have, relational issues, a physical affliction, a constant stressor, or something else. Then, as a group, commit to praying specifically and in Jesus’ name for the mountains that your fellow group members have shared. Collectively lift each other’s burdens through prayer.

session 5

UNIFIED COMMUNITY (ACTS 2:1)

As we consider the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, please note that the followers of Christ “were all together in one place.” One of the greatest blessings of being a child of God is, thus, belonging to a family of God, and just like any other family, God wants His children to love and serve one another. Jesus prays in John 17:23 that they would “be brought to complete unity” as a testimony of God’s love. When a community of people unifies around a shared hope, powerful things can happen, and the Church of Jesus Christ is history’s greatest example of that; they are children born into a living hope.

In the final week of this study, we will dive into the importance of community. Clinging to Jesus’ promises and living in expectation of the fulfillment of those promises is a beautiful and liberating thing. However, the reality is that sometimes we struggle to be fully confident of those promises. Life can hit hard, and we get discouraged. It is in those moments that the community of God that you have been fellowshiping with can remind you and encourage you with the truth of scripture and the faithfulness of Christ. Take the example of the disciples in Acts and be in close proximity to your fellow brothers and sisters of the promise.

START BY WATCHING THE VIDEO FOR EXPECTATION: SESSION 5

1. Go to crosslinechurch.com/expectation
2. Click "View Video"
3. Click "Watch Now" to view on the Crossline website, or follow the instructions to view on RightNow media

READ

Open your Bibles and read the following scriptures aloud as a group, taking a moment between each scripture to make some quick observations.

Acts 2:1

John 17:20-23

Ephesians 4:1-6

Hebrews 10:25

Romans 12:4-13

DISCUSS

1. What do you understand from Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-23?
2. From these passages, why do you believe disciples ought to be fellowshipping together?
3. Why is it significant that all the disciples are together in one place at the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

4. What is the difference between a friendship rooted in Christ and a friendship that is not rooted in Christ?
5. Read the Eph. 4 passage again. How do you think being a part of a unified community relates to living a life that is worthy of Christ's calling?

REFLECT

How was it praying boldly for your other group members this week? Take some time to share experiences and if you saw any mountains moved in your group, be sure to celebrate and thank God together!

**Also, if you didn't see mountains move, that doesn't mean to give up! Be committed to continuing to pray!*

APPLY

If you haven't had it already, have a focused conversation about the group. In that conversation, answer these questions:

- How do we want to remain connected? Are we going to do another study together?
- How do we want to encourage one another in our walks with Christ?
- What values of a Christ-centered community are most important to you?

ingredients for a great group

Whether you have been a part of a group like this before or not, please take a look at the following guidelines to help your group function to its greatest possible potential.

- **Don't Miss it!** This first tip is a big one! As a community group, commit not to miss a gathering! And be on time! If you are going to miss or be late, make it a commitment to let your host/group know ahead of time! (Not an hour before the group starts!)
- **Assign a timekeeper!** Within the group, someone appreciates organization and timeliness—assign this person to be the timekeeper for group time together. Permit this person to move things along to make sure everything gets done, and the group ends on time.
- **Keep it Confidential!** One of the beautiful things about Community Groups is the deep, meaningful conversation that happens. A definitive rule for your group that everyone ought to agree on is to keep sensitive things that are shared confidential!
- **R-E-S-P-E-C-T!** Your group comprises all sorts of people that come from all kinds of backgrounds—it's one of the great features of your group! As a group, commit to making your group a safe environment with mutual respect. Respect not only your fellow group members and your host but also the property of who's home you are meeting!

- **Have Fun!** Don't forget to have fun! Laugh! Play games! You can even make specific space for that stuff!
- **EAT UP!!** Food always provides a sense of comfort and unity in group settings, so whether it's a full meal, snacks, dessert, or coffee—Eat up!
- **Take Turns!** Many groups find ways for members to take turns on things such as providing food, leading prayer requests, texting reminders, or opening their home for the group. It's always healthy to not have one person in charge of something every time. (You can even assign a group member to coordinate this).
- **Find your groove!** Here is what is essential to know—no community group is the same, and that's okay! As a group, find your groove on how you do things and stick with it.
- **Don't let kids control!** If you are a group with kids, make group time a priority. It's easy to become overwhelmed with kids and their schedules and babysitters, but don't let that control your involvement! As a group, figure out the best scenario for childcare early on so that you can fully participate in the group. (E.g. Individual babysitters, group babysitter(s), putting on a movie in the back room, etc.)

commitment contract

(Some groups may want to consider utilizing this simple commitment contract as a way of keeping each other accountable to healthy group participation.)

- I commit to taking this group seriously.
- I commit to being intentional with my attendance to this group.
- I commit to engaging in conversation.
- I commit to respecting my fellow group members and keeping everything I hear confidential.
- I commit to being honest.
- I commit to all the things listed above because I value community, and I desire to grow closer to all those in my group.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

how to access rightnow media:

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In a web browser:

1. Go to Crosslinechurch.com/Community-groups
2. Find the link to gain RightNow Media access
3. Create an account, log in, and you are ready to Go!

On your phone:

1. Text "RightNow Crossline" to 41411.
2. Create an account, and you are ready to go!

We encourage you to look around the many different libraries for content that is appealing to you! Happy browsing!

other crossline groups resources

If you enjoyed this series, you might also enjoy the other small group studies produced by Crossline Community Church. Small-Group workbooks are available at Crossline Community Church. Please email us at info@crosslinechurch.com to arrange to pick up!

- The Man. The Myth. The Legend. Getting to Know the Real Jesus
- XII. Experiencing your Best Relationship with God and Others
- FAITH. Against All Hope

CREATING A MULTIPLYING GROUP:

“Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” **(Acts 2:46-47)**

The traditional and most widely accepted understanding of a small group in western culture is that it is a place for you to find friends from your church that you can grow close to over the course of years as you study the Bible. It is a social gathering with a spiritual emphasis. Then, once you find the right mix of friends, you protect it so that you can have an inner-circle community that you can do life with; we believe this is a central part of small groups.

However, this definition is not fully complete and is lacking the missional purpose of a small group. As we see in the passage above, the Lord added daily those who were being saved as a response to the fellowship of believers meeting in their homes and in the temple courts. As a follower of Jesus, isn't that your greatest hope? People being saved? If we collectively share this hope, we must acknowledge that it needs to be a core emphasis of our small group gatherings.

Similarly, small groups of believers must also have the same heart and attitude as Christ, who compassionately saw the crowds of Israel as "sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36) and who pulled the outcasts and overlooked into community with him. So, whether it's someone lost in sin or an uninvited brother or sister, small groups of God's people must have open doors.

Anything healthy and attractive will grow. If your group is healthy, you should expect it to grow. Our job is not to stifle growth and, with prayerful discernment, seek out the will of God for our group. That said, here are five helpful tips that you can weave into the leadership of your group that will create a culture of multiplication while still maintaining closeness with those in the group.

- **Communicate and Meta-Message the vision:** One of the essential parts of creating a multiplying group is to be clear about the mission and purpose of your group. This means that it would be wise to communicate the vision for your group at the start of each new study and check in with your group members about that vision. You also can meta-message the vision in group discussion throughout each study.

- **Stay Flexible:** Be very careful not to get too rigid in the structure or makeup of your group, which would prohibit newcomers from participating and stunt growth. Instead, be flexible to change things up and be checking in with your group members often.
- **Celebrate newcomers:** If you or one of your group members happens to (after first notifying the group) bring a newcomer, celebrate their participation! Be sure to extend loving hospitality that makes them feel genuinely welcome. Do your very best, as a group, not to come off as cliquey or exclusive.
- **Train up the members of your group:** As a leader, you should always be seeking to train the group members to lead as well. You can do this by asking them to facilitate conversation, lead prayer, set up the meeting schedule, select and lead a study, etc. Then be sure to follow up with them about it. If you are doing everything yourself, you are not creating a multiplying group.
- **Plant seeds of leadership:** One of the biggest reasons people do not lead or serve in ways they are capable of is that they are not asked. As you begin to notice certain members of the group evidencing leadership skills and spiritual maturity, it may be time to ask them if they would consider leading a group of their own. That can mean passing the torch of leadership to them OR having them start their own group OR splitting/subgrouping the group (which is growing) and having them lead the other group out of the split.

Having a multiplying group that you truly see people connected and brought to salvation through is wildly rewarding. I fully understand that it may seem to be disruptive to the closeness of your group. Still, counter-intuitively, it brings a group much closer as you engage in mission together and see God working through it. Don't feel like you have to start over every time your group grows, but rather just pull people on board for the journey that you are already on and trust the Holy Spirit!

about the editor

Jordan Gash is the Community Life Pastor at Crossline Community Church in Laguna Hills, CA. He graduated from Azusa Pacific Seminary with an M.A. in Pastoral Studies. Jordan has been working in both the Church and Christian organizational spheres since 2006. In his role as Community Life Pastor, Jordan oversees and shepherds a vast network of Community Groups. He has contributed to multiple adult small group curricula, including co-authoring FAITH: Against All Hope and XII: Experiencing your Best Life with God and Others, and authored several youth ministry groups' curricula. As a speaker at conferences and camps, he is passionate about encouraging practical application to Biblical truths. He is married to his wife, Alexandra, and has three young sons.

CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH:

Located in Laguna Hills, California, Crossline is a safe place to hear a life-changing message. With an emphasis on studying God's word and living out the gospel message, Crossline is committed to helping people come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. Whether this is your first time doing a small group study or being a founding member of our church, you are a vital part of our Crossline family. Everyone matters to God. Everyone matters to us.

If you have questions, prayer requests or needs, we are here to help, do not hesitate to set up some time to meet with our pastoral staff. Our contact information follows.

Sunday Services:

Main Services

9:00am & 11:00am – Worship Center

5:00 pm (Young Adults/Summit) – Fellowship Center

Classic Service (Traditional)

9:00 am – Chapel

Crossline En Español

11:00 am – Chapel

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COMMUNITY GROUPS