



Session 3

Raising an expectation

If we believe that God made each of us and designed us to have relationship with Him, we can expect Him to interact with us in our lives, every day. It is easy to forget that we are designed to be in a constant relationship with God – sometimes we ‘visit’ Him less frequently and more formally. We can raise our children in everyday relationship with God so that they expect to talk with, hear and experience Him.

God is invested in each of us from the very beginning of our lives. He is hands-on, not someone we have to strive to access. So how do we teach our children to understand this truth and have limitless expectation of God’s power in their lives? Firstly, we can model it. Children learn as they copy adults around them. They play mummy and daddy when that’s what they see happening, so let them have access to parts of your relationship with God. Let them see you pray at home so they know that you have a relationship with God that is based on interacting with Him.

There may be times when it is appropriate to let your children walk in faith with you, when you are waiting for God to move in a certain area of life. By sharing your expectations with them while you are still waiting for God’s intervention, you will allow them to grow and express faith too. In this way, we can encourage our children to grow up expecting miraculous solutions to problems!

When appropriate, let them pray for others with you. Encourage them to lay hands on the person if you do and teach them an expectation that God wants to use them to pray for others. Keep it simple, but make it clear that the same powerful God works through them as through you.

We can let our children know that they can expect to hear from God - in their dreams, in their conversations with God and even while they are having time out. We can also help them to practice the prophetic, asking them what they think God says about a situation. It is important to help them weigh what they think they have heard by seeing if it sounds like God and if it measures up with who the Bible says He is.

Even when they don't pick up anything from God, we are setting an expectation that it would be both exciting and normal for God to speak to them. We have several children who have seen angels in our church, some in meetings and some at home. One boy who struggled settling into school had an angel come to him at school and interact with him many times; the boy's description fitted with biblical descriptions of angels. For the boy, this encounter was God meeting his needs in a supernatural way and came out of a high expectation that God would meet with him.

How we talk within our family about speaking with God and expecting His supernatural intervention in situations will shape and develop our children's expectations in this area. This challenges me to raise my own expectations that God will be involved in my life, so that I can share that with my family.

Friendships for most of us grow out of shared experiences, trust and time. We can direct our children to 'who God is', we can model trust, we can share some of our experiences, but this is *their* friendship and *their* walk. Recently, a mum in the church had her four-year-old pray for her and she was miraculously and visibly healed. That girl has now experienced first-hand the fact that God heals and knows that God listens to her and wants to use her.

Our children can grow up in relationship with God – they don't have to wait to be 'of age' to choose God. As parents, we are the ones who can direct our

children to the God who made them and created them for relationship with Him.

Principles:

1) God made our children for relationship with Him.

John 17:3 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.' (NIV)

Mark 12:30 'Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'. (NIV)

1 John 4:19 'We love because He first loved us'. (NIV)

Jeremiah 9:24 'But let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight', declares the Lord. (NIV UK)

2) The same Holy Spirit can interact with our children as with us – not a mini version.

Acts 2:17 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.' (NIV UK)

1 Samuel 3:19 'The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground'. (NIV UK)

1 Samuel 16:13 (David as a child) 'So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David.' (NIV UK)

Genesis 39:2 (Young Joseph in Egypt) 'The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered' (NIV UK)

3) Our children can learn how to walk in relationship with God by watching us.

2 Kings 22:1-2 'Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed completely the ways of his

father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left'.
(NIV UK)

4) God can speak to our children and do the miraculous through them whatever their age.

John 6:9 (Boy at The Feeding of the 5000) 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?' (NIV UK)

Psalm 22:9-10 'Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even from my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God'. (NIV UK)

Mathew 18:10 'See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven'. (NIV UK)

Questions:

- What expectations do I have for God meeting with my child today?
- How can I speak to or interact with my child tomorrow to raise their expectation that God will meet with them in everyday life?
- How can I show my child more of my walk with God? How can I teach them ways to connect with God through what I do?
- Are there areas of my thinking that I need to allow God to come and change so I can have raised expectation of my child having a relationship with God?

Practicals:

- Model to your children something of your prayer life this week. Let them see you talk with God, listen to God and be expectant of His involvement in your life. Talk to them about why you do these things.
- Talk to your children about your own expectation of God encountering you in a Sunday meeting and translate that into an expectation for them.
- Encourage your children into their own daily conversation with God, not through you but through their talking and listening. Even if the starting

point is just talking to Him about their favourite toy or cartoon, encourage them to listen to what He is saying.

- When they face obstacles in life this week, be it their own behaviour or a challenge at school, encourage them to tell God, knowing that He loves them and wants to be involved in their everyday life.

Babies and Toddlers:

- We believe that even the youngest children can experience God. Tell them stories, speak out God's truth to them and tell them about His character. Let them see and experience you interacting with God – where appropriate, bring your baby along when you are praying for someone so that they can experience God's presence and see your expectation of His power. That way, expecting Him to move will be a normal part of life for them as they grow up.