



Expectations

Travis Brawner

Welcome everyone online; it's good to see you. I don't see you; that's what we usually say. So, it's good that you're joining us as we continue to work through this awkward and difficult time. We were set to start a new series today and a couple of weeks ago Ted called me and said, "Look, I know you're set to start this series, but is there anything that the Lord has placed on your heart that would be appropriate for this time?" I said, "Yes, absolutely let's go for it." So that's what we're doing today as we continue to work through this process.

Today, we're talking about expectations. First of all, I'm just going to define what an expectation is – **belief with certainty in what is going to happen**. It's pretty simple. I expect something is going to happen.

I first started thinking a lot about expectations about 22 years ago when my wife Kari and I were in our premarital counseling. Our friend and yours, Gary Smalley, was taking us through our premarital counseling. He talked about expectations and the reason it's so important to think about expectations in marriage, and especially before the marriage, going in. Each of us are going to have expectations based on our previous experiences and our upbringing about spousal roles and how things are going to look – who's going to be responsible for what? Even as we have children, how each is expecting the children to be raised. So, I thought a lot about that, in our marriage and ever since then, it's been very profound. It has left an impact on me.

I think a lot about expectations in everything, especially now with what we're experiencing and going through. We're dealing with a lot of expectations. If you rewind a few months before all of this started, you think about some expectations that weren't even conscious expectations, things that you just understood were true like you're always going to have access to toilet paper or various other things. When your hair gets long like mine, you expect you're going to be able to get in the car, go the barber, and get a haircut. Expectations that if we don't want to cook and clean up and we want to pay someone else to serve us our food tonight, we can go sit in a restaurant and we can be served that way. These things that we took for granted, you could say.

We had these expectations. And then as this came upon us and we moved into this several weeks ago where we started realizing that we're going to be in this quarantine and this staying at home and this more time at home, we started having expectations of what that was even going to look like. Those expectations, as they developed, were many.

As we realized we were going to have more time, for instance, we started thinking about the things we could get done at home. I don't know about you and your home, but my wife and I both had ideas about things that could get done. We quickly discovered, as Gary had taught us, that our expectations were different. What I mean is the honey-do list and the self-do list were very different. We had to work through that. They were very different lists of our expectations.

Some of us, many of us, for some reason, expected that our children were going to relish every extra family bonding time together, but that was not the case. It turns out that we even need a little social distancing at home every now and then.

There are other expectations. I don't know why I expected that a haircut from my wife was going to look like a haircut from my barber. In case you're wondering, we stopped just up the back part of the neck, which is why I'm maintaining this posture right here, maybe turning a little bit this way, but we're going to keep the back of the neck in that direction. After we got to there, I said, "Okay, we're good, this is not going well."

Then after that though, she turned her attention from me to the dog. You see, the dog is nonconsenting and can't refuse. In case you're wondering what the back of my neck might look like, this is Louie. Bless his heart, he got a haircut. Now, I want to say this: my wife is a homeschooling mother of four. She has her RN, and she has skills and talent for days in a lot of things. But I think we are going to agree that she needs a little formal education and some experience before haircutting and dog grooming go on that list. That was an expectation that we had that we hadn't found to be true – haircutting and dog grooming are things we should do at home.

Lots of expectation. Nobody, though, a few months ago, would have expected where we are, the things we would be dealing with quarantine and staying at home with everything else. That can be a problem for someone like me because I'm a planner. I know a lot of you are planners. I like to know what's going to happen next, so much so that I will alter my behaviors and I will do things so that I can be more certain in what's going to happen.

We have some control over the things that are going to happen, right? For instance, I study hard for a test, I can expect more so that I'm going to do well on the test. Or I drive safely, I can more so expect that I'm going to arrive safely without a ticket. Or if I show up at my job and work hard and I have a good attitude and express good character, I can more so expect that I'm going to stay employed.

Some things, though, we can't plan for and some things are out of our control and we have surprises, the unexpected. **And there are good surprises and bad surprises.** There are good unexpected things and bad unexpected things. For instance, a good unexpected thing is your spouse comes home and says, "Hey, I've planned this weekend you didn't know about. The kids are taken care of and we're going on a trip together." That's a really good surprise. That's a good unexpected thing. Or a boss that says, "I've recognized your work that you're doing and you're really contributing a lot to this company; I'm giving you a raise or a promotion." That's a good surprise, a good unexpected thing.

Again, we can have some bad unexpected surprises like, “You have cancer.” Some of you have received that news and gotten that bad, unexpected surprise. Or “I’m sorry, but we’re going to have to lay you off.” Or more appropriate right now, “We’re going to have to furlough you.” A lot of us have had to look up that word furlough for the first time ever. So, there are some bad unexpected surprises as well.

Unexpected things and surprises can be used in different ways. As a matter of fact, unexpected things or our expectations are a significant component in both comedy and horror. Ted would tell you that the unexpected is a major component of comedy; it’s part of what makes some things funny because it’s unexpected. It’s also in horror. I didn’t expect someone to jump out from behind that door. It’s the element of surprise and the unexpected.

Our expectations can go either way. We have these unexpected things and then we have things that we **expect that don’t happen**. So, expectation the other direction. We have these surprises. But then we have things we look forward to and we expect that don’t come true. We call those **disappointment**. So, disappointment is when **what you hope for is not fulfilled**. We have this expectation of something and this hope for something, this looking forward to something that’s going to happen, and it doesn’t.

The reason disappointment ties so much into expectation is because **disappointment is rooted in expectation**. It makes sense, right? If we never expected anything, there would never be any disappointment, so disappointment is rooted in our expectations. That’s why in our marriage we can become disappointed. That’s why in our parenting we can become disappointed. In our job and different things, we can become disappointed. Even in some trivial things we can become disappointed. Disappointment is rooted in expectation.

I like Indian food a lot. A few months ago, in January, we were going to celebrate my birthday and we were going to go to one of my favorite restaurants, Clay Oven. For a couple of days, I was anticipating this and looking forward to this. You know where I’m going with this; it’s January in Branson. All day I’m excited. I know what I’m going to order. I skipped lunch because frankly, I’m going to eat a lot of Indian food. We get there and the windows were dark and there was a sign on the door, “Closed for winter cleaning.” That’s disappointment, something I was expecting. My palate was ready for that. I don’t blame the folks over at Indian Clay Oven. How many people don’t close in Branson for winter cleaning? But what a disappointment. Although that’s a trivial one, you get the point. Our disappointment is rooted in our expectations.

Some people deal with disappointment and surprises pretty well and they can even thrive in the unexpected, but I think most people would agree, with what we’re going through, with the disappointments that we’ve faced right now, no one expected and no one is just passing right by. No one is just letting it just roll right off their skin. No one is just blowing right through this without any disappointment whatsoever. I think that’s the struggle that we’re all dealing with right now. No one expected the disappointment that we’re dealing with.

People expected that they were going to get to go to work, to earn a living, and to pay their bills. And that’s a disappointment that we have. We expected that our kids can go to school, get their education in the normal way that they have been, and that’s a disappointment.

We expect that we are going to be able to gather on Sunday and worship and fellowship together and that hasn't been the case; that been a disappointment.

So many other disappointments based on our expectations – events, weddings, graduations, funerals. We expect that when a loved one passes, we're going to be able to mourn them appropriately and have appropriate services. The reason is these are so profound and so deep and so personal. No one expected them and these are things that we can't just blow through because they are very profound expectations.

What has happened and what can happen, particularly in a situation like this with one disappointment after another; it just keeps happening. We've just had all these things plucked away from us. The problem is that **disappointment can breed hopelessness**. Disappointment, expectation, things that we hope in that don't come true, and these repeated disappointments and things that are so profound happening over and over can breed hopelessness. We know that from some different things and some different people groups and situations.... You may have experienced this. Applying for a job or some kind of graduate program, degree program. You just expect this time it's going to happen; it doesn't and it's another disappointment. And over and over, it becomes hopeless. You begin to feel hopeless in that pursuit.

Or children in the foster care system. We see that they go from home to home and those kids have an expectation that they may reunited with their biological parents or that they are going to find their forever home, and someone will adopt them. These kids that experience this expectation... This recurrent disappointment over and over is what breeds hopelessness.

Some of you have a friend or a family member that has an addiction to alcohol or some other substance. You have this hope, this expectation that this is the time that they are going to stay sober, this is the time they are not going to let you down; they are going to stay sober and they are going to make it. And if it happens over and over and over, you start to become hopeless that's it's ever going to happen. And that's what all of us are experiencing in this – the repeated disappointments that really are starting to breed hopelessness.

A few months ago, we started hearing about this COVID-19 and frankly as a physician and even as a person that just reads the news, we hear about these epidemics that happen all over the world on a pretty regular basis. For the most part, we take them with a grain of salt because most of the time, things are contained, and we don't see them on our front porch like we have with this one.

This one became what's called a pandemic, meaning it crosses continents and spreads across continents. As that happened a few months ago, we saw that this was becoming a reality and we saw this infections disease and what it was doing to people and what it can do to people and population not only medically, but what it has done to their societies. We can see this descending upon us in the United States and even in our own state and our own community. And as this happened, what we saw as this epidemic locally, pandemic globally, but an epidemic locally of a virus, we saw another epidemic develop. Really we're dealing with, I believe, two epidemics; one of a virus and one of fear.

Now, as we are progressing through this, I believe that we're seeing, as we know and we expect, that the virus is starting to flatten out, the curve is flattening so to speak. Things are calming down from an infectious disease standpoint. As the viral epidemic is slowing down, I believe we're seeing this fear epidemic still on the rise. You could fill in other emotions with that epidemic – fear, hopelessness, angst, frustration, doubt. So many emotions with this epidemic, this emotional epidemic that is taking place alongside this viral epidemic.

The thing between these two is the virus epidemic – this is called a novel virus. It's about five to six months old maybe. This is a new virus. That's why very little is known about this. Any healthcare expert, or person... Hardly anyone is an expert on this thing right now. Anyone that tells you with any certainty something they know about the virus frankly probably doesn't because there are just so many things that are unknown. So, many of you may be getting frustrated with the healthcare professionals saying we just don't know, but the fact is we just don't know. Again, it's a five to six month old virus. Imagine this. There are diseases we've known about for centuries that we are still trying to get a grip on and understand. This thing is five to six months old and we're still trying to understand it.

And yet, we're dealing with this emotional epidemic of fear, anxiety, angst, frustration. We know a lot about that. Ryan Pannell is a counselor and a friend of mine and he prayed for us. He knows that there are professionals that know very well how to deal with these things. And even people that don't, thankfully, understand that one of the things that we can do is cry out to God in this. A lot of people are doing that for the first time. They are turning to the Lord or turning back to the Lord for the first time in a long time.

People are crying out to God and as we do, it's important for us to remember something. As we are dealing with these uncertain things and we cry out to God, praying for deliverance and praying for answers, it's important for us to remember something that we preached about a few months ago when we did the series: *Promises not Promises*. God has promised us certain things and there are certain things he has not promised us. The reason this is relevant with expectations is because as we petition to the Lord and we cry out to the Lord and we can hope for and expect something, we have to remember what he did and did not promise us because if we are resting in promises that he did not make us, it's going to lead to disappointment and hopelessness and you see the cascade that takes place.

We remember from the series... It's archived on the website. I would encourage you to go back, if you haven't watched or listened to those, and check those out. It's a good refresher. Take a break from Disney+ and Netflix and watch some *Promises not Promises* sermons about how we are not promised tomorrow, we're not promised physical rest and healing, we're not promised earthly prosperity. Those things are so important for us to remember as we cry out to God.

We know how to deal with these things much more than we know how to deal with the virus because it's new. People have dealt with these things on many different levels from many different things besides this global pandemic. Again, we are all in this together. This is unprecedented in that the entire world is dealing with such a disaster at the same time.

We know that people deal with these things with uncertainty and fear and doubt based on their personal circumstances. Again, you have cancer or loss of a loved one or loss of a job that's not part of this massive pandemic that's taking place. If you've talked to someone who has been going through some of those things, you may say to your friend, "How are you getting by? What are you doing to cope? What does your life look like right now? What is it that you're doing?" A lot of times, we'll get this answer: "I'm just taking it one day at a time." That's because that's all they can do because there is a lot of uncertainty based on what they've been going through and what they are experiencing.

I think a lot of us, pretty much most of us find ourselves in this situation right now. We're just taking it one day at a time because we have no other choice. People experiencing difficulty to such a degree have no other choice than to take it one day at a time. I would bet a lot of us are doing the same things every day when we take it one day at a time. We're checking the news. We're checking our bank account. We're checking social media. We're checking our email and our texts. In that, for the most part, we're trying to figure out what's next. What is tomorrow going to bring? What is next week going to bring? Can we even possibly think about what next month or the next year is going to look like? As we do that, we're checking these things. We find ourselves doing just this – waiting. Waiting for tomorrow. Waiting for the next bit of information so that we can know what to expect. We find ourselves waiting and waiting, which is a very hard thing to do.

King David spoke about it in Psalm 39. He kind of lamented over this kind of like what is the point? What is the purpose? How long am I going to be dealing with this? How long am I going to be here? He spoke very profoundly on this.

He said, **4 "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!** In other words, Lord, help me to understand that I'm just here for a short time and make me realize that. And Lord, if you would, reveal to me how long that is. **5 Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!** What he is saying is from the beginning of time to the end of the earth is just a breath. The time of mankind on this earth is quick in light of eternity.

He goes on in Verse 6 and I think Verse 6 is interesting because we start to get this feeling of kind of like Ecclesiastes where Solomon, David's Son, is writing about the vanity of vanities and the sun goes up and the sun goes down. We have our toilsome labor, day after day, and then you die. You kind of get this feel in Verse 6. **6 Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!** In other words, I'm doing all this and who is even going to benefit from all this work that I'm doing? Then he comes back around in Verse 7, **7 "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?"** He's asking this pondering, rhetorical question. "Lord, what is it even that I'm waiting for. And then here it is: **"My hope is in you!"** He declares no matter what I'm waiting for, Lord, my hope is in you.

Speaking of waiting, there is a Christmas tradition that our family participates in and you might also. It's the Advent. Starting four weeks before Christmas, you celebrate each Sunday as a week of Advent. There are the three purple candles and the one pink candle and then the middle white candle. Leading up to each Sunday, you light a candle. The first two are the purple candles. Purple represents royalty

for the King of kings. The pink candle is the third that you light. The pink represents hope because we're getting close. Then you light another purple candle of royalty and then on Christmas day, you light the white candle that represents purity, the purity of the spotless lamb that Christ is.

This tradition is many centuries old and was started by the church with two remembrances or two ponderings. One is remembering the Nation of Israel that was waiting for the Messiah, that waiting. And then now where we are, this foreshadowing of the waiting for Christ. Advent means waiting with anticipation. That's a very different way to wait isn't it? Right now, we're waiting somewhat with angst and anxiety and some doubt and fears. But this advent tradition reminds us that we are waiting with anticipation and it brings us back to, **Z "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you."** It reminds us that when everything is stripped away, when we can't be occupied with the toilsome labor that we participate in day to day, we don't have the things that we're normally doing, we're stripped of that, we are reminded for what it is that we wait. We wait with anticipation for the Lord to return, for Jesus is coming back again. Shay did a great job last week wrapping up the *Jesus Is* series talking about *Jesus is Coming Again*. He gave a great picture of that. I just love that our family was blessed by that, Shay. Thank you.

And now, Lord, for what do we wait? Our hope is in the Lord. As we wait, we also understand though... As we have our expectations, it's important for us to understand that God has expectations of us as well. The interesting thing about God's expectations of us is that God's expectations do not change based on our circumstances. God expects the same thing from us all the time. He expects the same thing from us six months ago, before any of this happened, and now, and he expects the same thing from us six months from now, if the Lord doesn't return.

It makes me think of Dr. Smith, one of my attendings when I was a resident in training in Oklahoma City. Old, endearing Dr. Smith retired from his private practice after 35 years. When he did, at his retirement party, they did a skit depicting him. The first person came out carrying a cup of coffee and said, "This is Dr. Smith walking to his morning rounds." It showed him strolling to his morning rounds. Then they said, "And this is Dr. Smith rushing to the wards because one of the nurses has called, telling him his patient is crashing." And there is Dr. Smith walking the same way. The point there is that Dr. Smith was unchanging. Regardless of the circumstances, the situation, his attitudes, his words, his action were all steady. Now, obviously, he would run if his patient were crashing, but the point is Dr. Smith was steady and that's what God expects of us. His expectations don't change based on our circumstances.

There are some things that God expects from us.

1. To take heart. He expects us to take heart. Now the translation of take heart means literally to have courage, to be courageous or to gain back your courage. I want to be cautious here because I'm not telling people that we shouldn't mourn. I'm not saying that it's wrong to have doubt and fear and for those things to creep in. Or that when bad things happen, we shouldn't mourn. But, when we mourn, we should mourn with courage. Take heart.

Jesus said, in John 16: 33, ***“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart... Have courage in the tribulation. ...I have overcome the world.”*** Why? Because we are waiting with anticipation for the return of the Lord because he has conquered death and he’s coming back again.

2. Expect good. He expects us to expect good. Now I think we have to be careful with the use of this next scripture that we’re going to look at because some people may use it a little early in a difficult time or in a trial that someone is experiencing. Romans 8: 28... This is a very common scripture that is turned to, but so relevant for what we’re dealing with. It says, ***28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*** So, God expects us to expect good. And we know ultimately good in the end that he has conquered, but also, I think in our circumstances, that God expects us to look for good in the circumstances.

I think it can be difficult for us right now, as we’re dealing with the angst and the anxiety and the frustration, to look for the good in what’s taking place. I would encourage every one of us to pause and think about that. In what ways is God using this for good even right now. Personally, I can say again that our family has had a lot of personal bonding time together and we’ve made some great memories that we will never forget. Our kids will talk about these memories in this time to their kids and their grandkids for years to come. That’s something good that’s coming from this. I’ve had conversations with some friends that I haven’t talked to in five or ten years and that’s good. It’s things that we’ve said in passing like “I need to call so and so. I wonder how they’re doing?” So, we’re reconnecting with some people. So, what good is God bringing to you in this? God expects for us to look for the good.

3. Keep an eternal prospective. God expects us to keep an eternal prospective, understanding that this is not our home. This is not where we are going to be for eternity. In doing that, in keeping an eye on eternity, he also expects us to understand that we need to have earthly vision as well, that there are people around us that need help. Mark 12: 31 says love your neighbor as yourself. And Philippians 1: 21 says for me to live is, for me to be here, is Christ, and to die is gain. He desires for us to have an eternal perspective in all that we do.

4. Petition to Him while trusting his sovereignty. Those are two things, but they run in parallel and are directly connected. The Lord wants us to bring him our petitions. Let your requests be made known to God. But in doing that, he wants us to trust in his sovereignty and his sovereignty means that he has control, he has power over everything; he can do anything he wants to do and, in our petitions, we understand that.

5. Expect heaven. To acknowledge heaven. Of course, this is directly tied to the “he expects an eternal prospective.” He expects us to think of heaven, to understand heaven. Again, last week Shay did a great job of painting a picture for us of what that looks like. And God expects us to ponder that and to meditate upon that.

6. Trust in him and rest in his peace. This one is hard. This one is hard especially when we’re having all these disappointment and expectations that have been plucked away from us. As I declare that the Lord expects us to trust in him and to rest in his peace, I want to give you some practical points that you can use to help you trust in the Lord and rest in his peace.

This is going to sound a little bit like spiritual disciplines 101 and that's because it is. You see, I believe that in many things, the more complicated the situation, the simpler the solution. As things get really messy... And I believe this is in work and school and in our relationships and our marriages and our parenting. As things get very complicated, the solution should get simpler.

So, we're going to talk a little bit of spiritual disciplines 101 here. I would challenge anyone that is listening... I don't care who you are or where you are in your faith. If you are a decades old mature Christian, if you are a brand-new believer, or somewhere in between or someone who has fallen away that's coming back... Wherever you are in your faith, this applies. Again, when things get really complicated and really difficult, we get back to the basics of our disciplines and the things that can help us trust in the Lord and rest in his peace.

-Prayer. Charles Stanley challenges that each one of us need to have a time and a place dedicated for prayer. That's number one. You have to have a time and a place or else it's not going to happen. As we pray then, it's important for us to look at the way Jesus taught us to pray. There's a template for prayer that he gave us in our instructions how we should pray. He lays that out and says that we should acknowledge him. We should acknowledge God and who he is. We should confess our sins. We should express gratitude and thanksgiving. And we should bring our supplication or our petitions to him. And in that time and place we sit down and focus on these things. I would challenge us that in such a time as we feel such a need to bring so many petitions to the Lord that we take one, two, and three a little slower. We slow down and acknowledge who he is, confess our sinful nature, and seek forgiveness, and then express gratitude.

1. **Acknowledging who God is** and that's a form of praise within your prayer. Quoting scripture to the Lord about who he is and acknowledging who he is in your life.
2. **Confessing your sin to him.** Acknowledging that you are a sinful creature, that you have a sin condition. If you have chosen to follow Jesus, you have been saved from the consequences of sin, but we are still in this world and we still have a sin nature that takes us back to our sin behaviors and we confess those behaviors to him.
3. **Gratitude, expressing thanksgiving to the Lord.** I believe this one is big one. God works all things together for good. What good is God doing in your life in this time? And being grateful for the things that you have. I know a lot of you are thinking right now that you don't have a lot to be grateful for; things have been stripped away from you. I would suggest if you are watching this right now on a livestream internet device or computer or if you're listening on a podcast, your basic needs are being met. You have something to be thankful for. If not... Woodland Hills family, by the way, if your basic needs are not being met, we want you to plug into the church, reach out. We have resources and part of being a part of a church family is that we want to help you with those basic needs. But I would suggest that each of us is having our basic needs met.

We are eating every day. As a matter of fact, in our quarantine... I don't know about you, we've changed it up a little bit because of all these regular meals and cooking at home. A couple of weeks ago, Kari said to me, "Hey, for dinner tonight, we're going to have a charcuterie board."

I said, "Excuse me?" She said, "A charcuterie board." I think I'm pronouncing that right, if not, then pardon my French.

I said, "What's that?" She said, "It's a board that has crackers and slices of meat and slices of cheese and some other things on it." I said, "Oh, we're having a Lunchable for dinner." She said, "It's a little more sophisticated than that." So, we had the charcuterie board and it was a lot more sophisticated than a Lunchable. Turns out I like charcuterie. And I like saying that word, charcuterie. So, now I know three French words: croissant and charcuterie and crepe. Turns out they are all food. So, we have food to be thankful for. We all have something to be grateful for. If nothing else, God has met our basic needs and, in our prayers, we are thankful for him and we thank him for the many things, for our relationships, for his creation. Get outside and look around and you could spend hours just naming his creation and the things that he has given us, and we are grateful for that.

4. **Petitions.** I believe the way we petition to the Lord is very important, especially in this time. Remembering the promises he has made to us and those he has not made to us.

In surgery, I work with someone that's called a surgical technician. They're called scrub tech for short. As the surgeon, naturally I'm there operating on the patient and the scrub tech is responsible for kind of managing everything that's going on around the patient, the instruments, the equipment, the suction, the cauteries, and so many different things. Their job is to manage everything that's going on with the big picture.

As I'm focused in on what I'm doing, I'm calling out to the scrub tech for instruments that I need to do my job. So that's like you've seen on the medical drama shows when they are calling out for different things. They have some names for things that I've never heard, but that's beside the point. So, as I'm calling out for instruments, the scrub tech is handing me instruments and I'm carrying out the procedure. What can happen sometimes is that I'm very focused on what I'm doing, and I'll call out for a wrong instrument that I need in the moment. The scrub tech could give me that instrument. I can get in into the field of view, see it, and realize it was not what I needed. I would then have to pass that one back and ask for the correct one bring back down into the field to do what it is that needs to be done.

Now, if you work with scrub techs who are good and they are experienced and they are perceptive and knowledgeable, which I do. I work with some very good scrub techs a lot. Lindsey and Kim are two that I work with on a regular basis and they are tremendous. So, sometime, because they have a familiarity and they see the whole picture, they know what's going on. I'll call for an instrument that they realize is wrong in the moment. What they will do then is they will, if I say I need the Freer Elevator, they will rather hand me the Woodson Elevator and say, "Don't you mean the Woodson Elevator?" That's because they know. They see the whole picture and they know the case. There's a phrase that surgeons will tell scrub techs from time to time in that scenario. They say, "You should give me what I need, not what I ask for."

Would we petition to the Lord in such a way? The one that sees the big picture and everything that's going on, knows what we need in the moment, knows what the next steps are, knows what has taken place. As we're so laser focused on our little field of vision here and what's going on, would we petition to the Lord in such a way?

I'm experiencing right now, seeing Kim Johnson, who I've worked with so much, going through her own personal trial right now with cancer. The same gal that has given me the instruments that I need and not what I ask for so many times is petitioning to the Lord in this time as she's dealing with this. What a time to be dealing with this too, as if there wasn't enough going on. Kim is constantly petitioning to the Lord and saying, "Lord, I know this is what I want, Lord, but more so give me what I need." Would we petition to the Lord in such a way like Kim is petitioning to the Lord, knowing that he sees the big picture. He's not so laser focused as we are, and he knows what we need. Lord, give me what I need, not what I ask for.

5. **Surrender.** Surrender each day to him. I believe this starts in the morning and it's a mindset, it's how you wake up and how you're going to go about your day. As we surrender the day, we understand... I love how Ted has us raise our right hand from time to time and declare that we resign as general manager of the universe. There are so many things out of our control right now and so much can be said for us to trust in the Lord and rest in his peace if we can wake up each day and surrender that day to him. Lord, no matter what news I get, no matter what the experts are saying, what the government is saying, Lord, I surrender this day to you.
6. **Meditate** on scripture. Now, notice I didn't say read scripture. Meditating on scripture is a very different thing. We hear this word *meditate* and we tend to think maybe eastern religion or kind of popular wellness right now where mediation is to just free your mind, empty your mind and your soul. Christian meditation is very different. As Christians, we meditate by giving the word of God and Holy Spirit as much room in our soul as we can possibly give them. We empty ourselves of ourselves so that they can have more elbow room to do their work, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

I want to read a passage to show you... Again, it's a psalm of David as an example of David meditating upon the Lord. It's a passage we can use to meditate on scripture. Psalm 40 – ***1 I waited patiently for the Lord...*** How that speaks to us and the Holy Spirit working through us right now. ***...he inclined to me and heard my cry. 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. 3 He put a new song in my mouth...***

A lot of us need a new song in our mouth right now. The words that are coming out can be a bit venomous. ***...a song of praise to our God.*** May he change the song that's in our mouth. ***Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. 4 Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! 5 You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds... gratitude ...and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.***

Would you meditate on God's Word, mediate on scripture? Let the Holy Spirit fill you with his Word and do more wonderful works in your life in this time.

Those are some simple spiritual disciplines that apply to every single one of us. It speaks to our upward relationship with the Lord and things that we can be doing.

But now, what are some things in our outward relationships, practical things that we can be doing. As we move forward with those around us in our community and in the workplace, as we go back and so many different things. What are some things we can be doing? I want to talk through a few of these.

- **Don't be divisive.** This virus is five or six months old. Nobody is an expert. There are a lot of people that may claim to be experts or know some definitive things. There being no experts, most everything is opinion. So many things that are opinion right now. We cling so firm to our opinions about what needs to happen next. Here's the thing about our opinions with that. Some people have changed their opinion from two months ago. As this was coming down, we started hearing things. There were people that were on the "no, we're going to stay open" end of the spectrum that are now saying, "No, we need to stay closed and be safe." People that were fearful for the sake of the economy may now be fearful for the sake of health. People's opinions are changing and what we need rather than being divisive is grace, grace to understand that everybody is concerned, everybody is nervous, anxious, fearful, all of those things, and we should not be divisive.
- **Be patient, flexible, and adaptable.** Remember that disappointment is rooted in expectation and what are your expectations? Are you setting yourself up for disappointment or are you waiting for the Lord? And now, O Lord, for what do I wait. Be patient, flexible, and adaptable. And as things change tomorrow, as things change next week, we're best going to be able to serve the Lord and serve others in being patient, flexible, and adaptable.
- **Be perceptive.** Again, there are those around us with great need. So many with so many needs that can be met. As Ted has said from the beginning we've said as a church that we intend to be generous and we are going to continue to be generous. I would encourage individuals and businesses and everybody to be perceptive of those around you. Be perceptive in the things that you're saying because you may say something you think is just getting your opinion out, but it can be very off as far as what people need to hear or what can be encouraging.
- **Take a break.** I know, you're thinking. *There is a permanent, gluteal impression on my couch; what do you mean take a break?* I don't mean physically take a break; I mean take a break from the news and from social media. Take a break from the noise that is feeding into the fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and disappointment. Pull some weeds. Go for a walk. Make a charcuterie board or learn and new French word. Do something, but take a break from the news, from social media, and the things that are pouring into that uncertainty.
- **Trust in the Lord.** This applies with our outward relationships. We trust in the Lord in all that we do.

I want to close, reminding us that expectations are things that we have belief with certainty that are going to happen and that our disappointments are rooted in expectations. It's understandable that a lot of us may be feeling hopelessness right now because these repeated disappointments have brought on that hopelessness, but the Lord expects us to take heart, to have courage, to be courageous even in this difficult time and even in the uncertainty.

May we not be divisive, but look for ways that we can be perceptive in seeking the needs of others, remembering, and now, O Lord, for what do I wait? We wait for the Lord himself. We wait for Christ. When everything else is stripped away, we know that the Lord has promised us eternity with him for those who have confessed with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, believed in their heart that God raised him from the dead. If that's not you and you are not sure what that means or have more questions about what it means to follow the Lord, we want you to reach out to the church, reach out to someone, a friend or family member, someone that can tell you more about that and to understand that.

Today I want to close by praying together. Lord, we love you and we, even in such difficult times, acknowledge that we can trust in you and we can have rest and peace in you, Lord. Lord, we acknowledge you, our God. You are our God. You are three in one – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no other God; it is you alone.

Father, forgive us for our sins. We are grateful for the forgiveness we receive in Christ who was born, lived a perfect, sinless life, died a sinner's death as the spotless lamb so that we could spend eternity with you in heaven.

We are grateful for so many things; just for food to eat, for time with family, for time to contemplate and ponder and meditate as we've been forced to slow down. We know that as we are waiting, there are so many that are hurting. We're grateful for the ways that you are still working miracles even in this difficult time, Lord.

Father, we bring to you our petitions and we seek that you would give us what we need, not what we ask for. We know that you tell us that we should bring the desires of our heart, Father, but we know you are sovereign, you are in control and you know what you are doing. Lord, we pray that you would grant that we would seek your truth, that we would understand your truth, and we would believe your truth. And that this belief would guide our words and actions, fulfilling your will and your purpose for our lives, individual and as a church. We pray that as we go out this week and as we wait, not knowing what necessarily what to expect tomorrow and looking forward to the next thing, Father, that you would grant us peace, that you would help us to rest in your peace, Father.

We thank you, we love you, and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.