

Bless This Mess | Philippians 4:1-3 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To recognize the unrealistic expectations we may have about church, to identify ways we can love others by addressing conflict in a healthy way, and to pray for our church community.

Icebreaker: In this week's sermon, Keith shared the saying, "The key to a happy life is low expectations." And he said that disappointment is the gap between expectations and reality.

Have you ever experienced the disappointment of reality falling short of your expectations? Share a story of a time this happened to you.

Discussion

1. What comes to mind when you think of an ideal church? What do you think most people expect a church to be like in an "ideal" scenario?
2. How have you experienced disappointment from your own unrealistic expectations about church?

Read:

Proverbs 14:4

⁴Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean,
but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.

3. Keith explained that this proverb is as true for churches as for livestock. The bigger the success, the messier it's going to be.

What does "success" mean for a church? With this in mind, why should we expect success and mess to go together?

4. What are some realistic expectations for what a church is like?

Read:

[Philippians 4:2-3](#)

² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Transition: Our challenge is to love the real church, real Christians—the ones Jesus loved. This means moving toward each other in community when we face conflict instead of splitting apart.

Here are 5 steps that Keith shared in service to help us deal with conflict:

- 1) Confront the issue head on.
- 2) Come alongside.
- 3) Plead, don't command.
- 4) Ask for help.
- 5) Remember what you have in common.

5. Review these steps together as a group. Why is each one important? What do they look like practically?
6. What is challenging to you about this framework? Which of these steps do you have the hardest time with?
7. What's encouraging about this framework? Which of these steps do you think would be especially helpful for you to remember in your relationships?
8. Consider an area of conflict in your life right now. What's one step you could take to apply this framework to that situation?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Sharing and Prayer:

As a group, reflect on how God has used The Crossing in your lives:

- How did you end up at The Crossing? Share what events and circumstances led to this becoming your church home.
- What are you thankful for about our church?
- What are some things you'd like to pray for God to do at The Crossing?

End your time together praising God for the ways he's using our church in your lives and in the community. And ask him to keep working in our church to help more people believe that Jesus is more.