

newark united pentecostal church**Lesson Title:** Failed Expectations – John the Baptist

Key Concept: The Bible is filled with people for whom God did not do what they expected. Though John was faithful as the one coming before the Messiah, his expectations were not met once the Messiah came.

**Scriptures:**

The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples, and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”
(Luke 7:18–19 *New Living Translation*)

“God blesses those who do not fall away because of me [or who are not offended by me].”
(Luke 7:23 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Mark 6:14–20; Luke 3:18–20; Luke 4:14–21; Luke 7:18–35; John 1:29

**Lesson Thoughts:**

John the Baptist is a leading character in the gospels. He preached truth, dressed very oddly, baptized unto repentance, and proclaimed that he was not the Messiah and would be followed by another. He was faithful to his God and his calling. Then Herod arrested and imprisoned him, and John began to hear of Jesus’ ministry. So, he sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus to confirm that he was the Messiah. Given the combined gospel record, this seems to be an odd inquiry given that John had proclaimed “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Was he really seeking confirmation? Or was he perhaps seeking clarification? John was surely trying to understand his current circumstances, which certainly were not meeting his expectations. Perhaps behind the simple question were a

newark united pentecostal church

host of other questions: Why am I in prison? What is going to happen? Why haven't you come and gotten me out? Am I going to die? What was the point? The reality is that God is sovereign and thus does not always meet our human expectations. God acts in ways we do not understand, and thus, like John, we deal with failed expectations.

Jesus' answer also failed to meet expectations. He simply sent John's disciples back with a paraphrase of prophecies from Isaiah (Luke 7:22), similar to the passage he had read earlier in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:14–21). Then he made a pivotal statement: "God blesses those who are not offended by me." Until this statement, we might think Jesus did not understand what John was asking. But with this statement the fuzzy story sharpens into clear focus. John was struggling with failed expectations and Jesus did not even attempt to meet them.

As with John, Jesus calls us to trust him. His will. His way. His process. If God's thoughts are not like our thoughts and his ways are as far above our ways as the heaven is above the earth, then *failed expectations* should be *expected* in our walk with God. It is not wrong that we dream. It is not wrong that we desire. It is not wrong that we try to understand what God is doing. But in the end, when our expectations are not met, hear the voice of our heavenly Father appealing: "Please do not be offended by me." Trust God.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What does it mean to be in the will of God?
- 2) What do you expect God to do if you are obedient to his will?
- 3) Share an example of when God has failed your expectations.
- 4) Play Tom Trimble's "The Revelation of John the Baptist" (<https://youtu.be/4SYCaQeMn7Q>) and reflect.

Next Lesson: Failed Expectations – Joseph

newark united pentecostal church

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Search the Scriptures for other examples where a person was obedient to the will of God and yet experienced failed expectations.
- 2) Make a list of ways that you can respond appropriately and positively to failed expectations.
- 3) Daily play Tom Trimble's "The Revelation of John the Baptist" (<https://youtu.be/4SYCaQeMn7Q>) and worship God as an act of submission.