

Session #2

Stop Mind Reading and Clarify Expectations

Prereading

Relationships tend not to remain static over time. They evolve or they do not, they grow, or they shrink. If a relationship deepens over time, the intimacy in that relationship does the same. Growth in intimacy is one of the best ways to measure the growth in the friendship. A symptom of a dying or stagnant friendship is a decrease in intimacy.

One of the big killers of relationships are assumptions and unmet expectations. Think back to your own interactions over the past week. Did you make any assumptions about someone when they didn't follow through? Did you have an expectation of someone and they failed to live up to it?

It can be as simple as a roommate leaving dirty dishes on the counter after breakfast and then leaving for the day. What assumptions come to mind? "They are lazy and I'm carrying them." "They don't care about keeping the apartment nice and clean, they are a slob." "They are thoughtless and inconsiderate." These thoughts can be especially true when the behaviour is something that is repeated. We wonder why they didn't clean up after themselves, without ever asking them. These expectations can send us in to a very bad day and we blame them for attitude.

What if there was a good reason for the dishes being left out. What if your friend received a phone call saying a relative was in the hospital and in their preoccupation with the emergency simply rushed out the door? Do you still have the same thoughts about them? What if instead you asked a simple question. "I noticed the breakfast dishes left out, is everything ok?" The door then opens to discover more of what is happening, preserve the relationship and your thought life. If there was no emergency and your friend simply left out their dishes because they forgot or were lazy a second statement can be made, "Can we have an expectation of each other that we clean up our own dishes in a timely manner." If your roommate says "no," you have other problems 😊.

The stories that we tell ourselves in interacting with others shapes how we view our relationships. If a co-worker is late getting into the office our thoughts can go in one of two directions. We can think, "They probably stayed up late and are too lazy to drag themselves in the office." Or we can think, "Maybe they had some sort of car trouble, or family trouble and doing their best to get here." Both shape how we see and value people. Only one leaves the door open to a healthy relationship.

Practicing Silence and Stillness

Introduction

Skill number two comes out of the ninth commandment found in Exodus 20:16:

““You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Many times in the Bible we can see God’s perspective on bearing false witness towards someone. In Deuteronomy 19:18-19:

“... if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party...”

When we make negative assumptions of another person without first testing those assumptions, we are in danger of misreading the situation and bearing false witness towards them in our hearts and minds. These false assumptions then “leak” to those around us creating unhealthy relationships and damage to individuals and groups.

Applying the two skills in session 2, “Stop Mind Reading and Clarify Expectations” help to create an environment that prevents misunderstandings on both a large a small scale with our families, friends, co-workers, and church. Practicing these two skills prevent a significant number of conflicts in our relationships.

Growing Connected

Handbook to Renewal Day by Day Debrief: What obstacles, difficulties, or success did you experience in meeting with God this week using the daily resource?

Share a recent unmet expectation you had of someone (Example: phone call, text, email not returned). What story did you tell yourself?

Bible Study

In first Kings 21, King Ahab wanted to purchase the vineyard off the owner, Naboth. Naboth, being concerned about the inheritance he had received from his ancestors and would leave his descendants, refused the request (In ancient Israel each Israelite family was given a plot of land that belonged to that family line in perpetuity. Selling ancestral land was discouraged. Even if the land was sold the property would revert back to the original family during the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25). Seeing that the

King had more power and influence, Naboth was unsure the land would be returned to his ancestors). Upon being refused, Ahab engaged in a pity party and his mother, Jezebel, also attempted to purchase the vineyard. Ahab and Jezebel devised a plan to have Naboth killed and take the property by force. The King and his mother found two individuals who would testify falsely about Naboth.

Read aloud 1 Kings 21:1-4.

“Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, “Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.” But Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.” So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.” He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.”

What assumptions do you think Ahab made with his request? What assumptions do you think he made after hearing Naboth’s response? How could Naboth have stopped mind reading and clarified expectations?

Often a perceived slight or unmet request can send us down an unhealthy path of assuming the worst about someone. We then begin to justify any behavior that gets us a desired outcome. Jezebel set up an event that would have Naboth in a prominent place with two false witnesses who would speak against him.

Read aloud 1 Kings 21:12-13

“They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, “Naboth has cursed both God and the king.” So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death.”

At this point, what story do you think Ahab was telling himself about Naboth?

Can you briefly share a situation you were in when what you were thinking or feeling about someone was untrue? How have you misinterpreted the behavior of another person without checking it out?

Video: Stop mind Reading and Clarify Expectations

These skills are meant to help us grow as disciples of Christ.

Skill #1: Stop Mind Reading

Purpose: To clarify what another person is thinking rather than assuming we know.

Principle: Never assume we know what someone is thinking.

How can we stop mind reading?

1. Ask permission to read the persons mind.
2. Say, "I think you think...Is this right?"

Pitfalls of mind reading:

1. We tell ourselves stories about other people that are not true.
2. Making negative assumptions without checking them out harms relationships.

Skill #2: Clarify Expectations

Similar to stop mind reading, Clarify Expectations is about eliminating confusion, pain and disappointments in relationships.

Purpose: To recognize whether certain expectations are valid or not, and to clarify those expectations.

Expectations come from many sources: family, TV, cultures, internet, fairy tales, magazines, and more.

The problem with many expectations:

1. **Unconscious:** We have expectations of others we may not even know we have until we are disappointed by them.
2. **Unrealistic:** We have expectations that are not reasonable.
3. **Unspoken:** We know we have an expectation that may be realistic, but we don't speak it.
4. **Un-agreed Upon:** We have expectations of others that they did not agree to. Others may have expectations of us that we did not agree to.

The Big Question

What expectations do I have a right to have and what expectations do I not have a right to have? What is a valid and invalid expectation?

What makes an expectation valid?

1. **Conscious** – I am aware I had this expectation?
2. **Realistic** – Is this expectation reasonable? Why or why not? What is the specific evidence that the other party can or will do this?
3. **Spoken** – I have expressed the expectation clearly.
4. **Agreed Upon** – The other person has agreed to expectation by saying “yes.”

Principle: An expectation is only valid when it is mutually agreed upon. Some expectations to this principle are expectations between a parent and child (e.g. chores); employer/employee contracts, and marriage vows of faithfulness.

Individual Activity

Think of a recent, simple expectation you had that was unmet and made you angry, disappointed, or confused (Unreturned phone call, skipped birthday card from a friend, Son didn't call on Mother's day, Lights weren't turned out by the last person home). Write it below.

Use the following Checklist to clarify the expectation in you for your own thinking:

1. **Conscious** – I was aware I had this expectation?
2. **Realistic** – Is this expectation reasonable? Why or why not? What is the specific evidence that the other party can or will do this? An example of this might be a family holiday together. If there is conflict every year, is it realistic to expect there won't be conflict this year?
3. **Spoken** – I expressed the expectation clearly. I did not assume they just should know.
4. **Agreed Upon** – The other person agreed to expectation by saying “yes.”

Remember the Principle: An expectation is only valid when it is mutually agreed upon.

Partner Activity

1. Have someone share the expectation they wrote down and whom it applies to. Role play with another person in the group.
2. Practice clarifying your expectations and see if it is agreed upon. Possible sentence starters:
 - a. I'd like to clarify an expectation I have of you...(expectation)...Is this correct?
 - b. I expect...(expectation)...because...(reason)...Can we agree to that?
 - c. I wonder...are you willing?

- d. I'd like to check an assumption I've made...(assumption)...is this correct
- 3. If there is time, have two other people try it with a different expectation.

Discuss

What was the experience like for you?

Where else in your life might you have expectations, or be making assumptions of others, that you need to clarify. What is an expectation someone might have of you that needs clarification? What might be your next steps?

Conclusion:

Personal Action Step

Decide when you will practice this skill before the next session (Two or three times is possible).

I plan on practicing Stop Mind Reading and Clarify Expectations:

With Whom? _____

When? _____

Handbook to Renewal Day by Day: Use days 6-10