

## **DEFINITION**

a belief that something will happen or is likely to happen; a feeling or belief about how successful, good, etc., someone or something will be (*from Merriam Webster*)

**SYNONYMS:** anticipation, assumption, hope, probability, belief

## **Taking It Home:**

### **Activity: Watch “Remember the Water”**

We allow our expectations to control us rather than us controlling them. We have the power to choose and yet we regularly forget it when it comes to the most mundane moments of our lives. This is the challenge that author, David Foster Wallace, lifted up in his remarkable 2005 Commencement [speech](#). This month challenge yourself with the same message:

**Your assignment:** Pay extra attention to the way Wallace links our forgetting with the most mundane moments in our lives. Figure out where the call or challenge is for you. Exercise your power to choose! Find opportunities to “remember the water” and practice choosing.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CrOL-ydFMI>

### **Books:**

Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting – Holly Whitcomb

### **Article:**

We See in Others What We Expect to See  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-big-questions/201105/we-see-in-others-what-we-expect-see>

These materials are part of the small group ministry program at Jefferson Unitarian Church. For more information on using them, or to set up your small group, please contact Rev. Eric Banner.

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# **Jefferson Unitarian Church December 2015 Small Group Session: Expectation 1.0**

**Opening/  
Chalice  
Lighting:** As we come together,  
I go into myself.  
I dig into myself for a deep answer.  
I have patience with everything that remains  
unsolved in my heart, and I live the question.  
What is required of us is that we love the difficult  
and learn to deal with it.  
In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands  
that work on us.  
It is clear that we must embrace the struggle.  
Right in the difficult we must have our joys, our  
happiness, our dreams.  
We create this space to go into ourselves and see  
how deep the place is from which our  
lives flow. **(RM Rilke, adapted by Scott Rudolf)**

**Check In:** Up to 2 minutes per person to share what they  
bring with them since the last time the group met

**Reading:** But expectation also leads us on, urges us on,  
doesn't it? I know that I live in expectation. I  
expect the sun to rise tomorrow. I expect that I'll  
be surprised again and again at the harm we can  
do one another. And I expect that I'll be surprised  
again and again by the beauty in the world, and  
the depth of love that people can have for other  
people. I expect it. And it draws me on. — **Rev.  
Joe Cleveland**

**Resting in  
the  
Silence:** Take 2 minutes to just sit. If your group is up to it,  
go longer, as long as you let people know how  
long the silence will be.

**Questions  
and  
Quotes  
From The  
Common  
Bowl:** Share the quotes and questions for today's  
session in the way that is customary in your small  
group. You can pass the sheet, you can select  
them randomly from a bowl after having cut them  
into individual pieces. Or whatever works well for  
your small group.

**Sharing/  
Deep  
Listening:** Allow each person up to five minutes to share  
what has come up for them about today's topic. If  
someone does not use the full five minutes, make  
sure you count to ten full breaths before moving  
on to the next person, in case the speaker is not  
truly finished.

**A Second  
Share:** If time allows, you may have a brief second share  
from those who have found they have more to  
say, keeping in mind your commitment to going  
no longer than ninety minutes.

**Closing  
Reading:** If your heart is a volcano, how shall you expect  
flowers to bloom? — **Khalil Gibran**

**Extinguish  
the  
Chalice:** Join hands and say the following together:  
“May we rise to our own highest expectations,  
and be kind to ourselves when we fall short, until  
we meet again.”  
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet  
again.

*What Does It Mean To Be  
A People of Expectation?*

God give us rain when we expect sun.  
Give us music when we expect trouble.  
Give us tears when we expect breakfast.  
Give us dreams when we expect a storm.  
Give us a stray dog when we expect congratulations.  
God play with us, turn us sideways and around.

— **Michael Leunig**

Pray for our expectations to be turned on their heads? Give us tears when we expect to be fed? Give us wild obligations when we expect congratulations? Turn us sideways? You want us to pray for *this*? Hope for *this*? That's a bit nuts! And a bit UU.

We all know the common mantra: "You get what you expect." That, most certainly, is part of what it means to be a people of expectation from an UU perspective. We believe that human beings have tremendous power to shape and create their own experience. If you expect people to be good, you will discover and notice goodness. If you believe life is on your side, you will see opportunities unfold over and over again. This form of relating to expectation is about reminding ourselves that we have control. It's about noticing we have options. It's about taking hold of the situation and putting our stamp on it.

And yet there are also moments when letting the situation take hold of us is good for the soul. Sometimes holding too tightly to our desired expectations leaves us blind. Sometimes getting what we expect leads to expecting to always get what we want. Sometimes the most important question is not "Are you ready to take control of the reality in front of you?" but instead "Are you willing to let go of expectation and be led by the unknown?"

Another way to put all this is to ask, *do you trust?* Do you have faith that this wildly unpredictable life of ours won't lead you astray? When your expectations get turned on their head, do you see that as a threat or are you willing to lean in? When that stray dog messes up your big congratulatory day, are you willing to follow where it wants you to go or is your first instinct to put it down?

Please don't put it down.

That's the message of Michael Leunig's prayer. That's what he's praying for. That's what he wants *us* to pray for! Please, please, pray *for* those stray dogs and tears at breakfast. Pray dearly for life to send you its blessed disruptions. Please, please, pray that life will lead you into the land of crushed expectations - into that *wonderfully sacred* land inhabited by the holy angels of "perhaps," "maybe, maybe not," "what if," "I wonder what else?" and "I wonder if there is another way?" And pray for all this, NOT because disruption is "good for us" or because we all deserve a needed dose of humility, but because it signals that you're finally able to trust -- that you've finally decided that sometimes it's ok to put your preferred expectations aside, because -- as strange or scary as the unknown is -- you know it won't lead you astray.

So, yes, this month, bring on those unruly dogs and unpredictable tears. Make our music wilder than we want and make us eventually want it to be that wild. Play with us indeed. Turn us sideways and around, and lead us expectably on!

Patience is the virtue that shows us that the time of the soul and the time of the spirit are different than everyday time. Patience is required to be in healthy connection with soul and spirit. Patience concerns a particular form or way of waiting; it is one filled with expectation. — **Robert Sardello**

What if “it” begins this very month?! What would happen if you knew this month was going to be the start of some yet-to-be discovered new adventure?

Are you expecting too much of yourself?

Are you expecting too little?

Expectations are resentments under construction. — **Anne Lamott**

Have you been chasing an expectation too long? Is it time to let it go?

Did the lessons your parents taught you about the power and possibility of expectation prove correct?

Insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different results.

Are your holiday expectations set too high?

Are your holiday expectations too low? Isn't this a time of expecting miracles?

“If you expect nothing from anybody, you're never disappointed.” — Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

What happens to you when you don't get what you expect? Is there work there for you?

“Whatever it is you're seeking won't come in the form you're expecting.” — Haruki Murakami

Are you sure you shouldn't wait just a little bit more? Is life asking you to be patient just a little bit longer? Are you sure that expectation of yours isn't right around the bend?

“When you stop expecting people to be perfect, you can like them for who they are.” — Donald Miller, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: What I Learned While Editing My Life*

Do you expect the best or the worst of people? Are they innocent until proven guilty or guilty until proven innocent?

Are you really open to “whatever comes”?

Has the weight of societal expectations become more than you want to bear alone?