

BIG IDEA

To have emotionally healthy relationships, stop mind-reading, and clarify expectations by talking to people – in person instead of in your head.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:37-39, Exodus 20:16, Proverbs 18:13

ICEBREAKER

Have the group play a game of telephone. Try to determine where the phrase deviated. How would the game be improved if you were allowed to repeat or clarify the phrase?

OPENING THOUGHT

Two of the most effective tools to prevent misunderstandings in your friendships, family, workplace, and church are to clarify expectations and stop mind-reading. What do you think each of these tools means? How do you think they contribute to loving others well?

BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 22:37-39. What role do clear expectations and communication play in healthy relationships?
2. Read Exodus 20:16. What do you notice about this passage? How have you interpreted it in the past?
3. Read Proverbs 18:13. What do you notice?

LIFE APPLICATION

4. What do you do when your expectations of another person aren't met? In what ways would you like to adjust the way you respond (see the leader's guide for some tips).
5. Mind Reading is defined as assuming what others are thinking, telling ourselves a story in our head to explain another person's behavior. How do assumptions lead us to believe untruths about our neighbor? How might "Mind Reading" be a way of bearing false witness in Exodus 20:16?
6. Listed below is a 4-step process to clarifying expectations. Which one do you most often get tripped up on? Why?
 - a. Conscious: I must become aware that I have expectations.
 - b. Realistic: I must discern if my expectations are realistic. Is there is evidence to support the expectation I have for another person? Have they done what I want in the past? Do they have the capacity for it? Are they willing?
 - c. Spoken: I must express the expectation clearly, not just assume they understand what I want without checking.
 - d. Agreed Upon: The other person has agreed to the expectation by saying "yes." Remember, expectations are only valid when they have been mutually agreed upon.
7. How would this process help you determine what expectations you have a right to hold? How would it eliminate some conflict in our relationships?

CHALLENGE

Think of a recent, simple expectation you had that went unmet and made you angry, disappointed, or confused. Use the 4-step process to clarify that expectation. Was your expectation valid, or was it missing a critical step? Spend some time this week thinking about where else in your life, you might need to clarify expectations or assumptions – in your workplace, school, family, or friendships? What might your next steps be?