

THE EXPECTATION GAP

PART 3: WHEN PROGRESS STALL

WIN

To reframe what “progress” in the Christian life really looks like, shifting from self-improvement to worshipping God.

CONNECT

Have you ever started something with big expectations (gym, hobby, reading plan, diet) and then felt discouraged when the results didn’t match the effort?

LEARN

Before watching the video together and discussing the questions provided, we suggest taking a few moments to pray. Here’s a simple prayer you can use:

Heavenly Father,

We often assume we should be further along than we are. Help us see progress the way you see it. Shift our focus from proving ourselves to paying attention to you. Amen.

After praying, watch the video for Part 3.

APPLY

Discuss the following questions as a group:

1. When have you caught yourself thinking, I should be further along by now? What triggered that thought—comparison, disappointment, or something else?
2. Steve mentioned how we often read Scripture as a self-improvement plan rather than a story of worship. How have you seen that show up in your own faith journey?
3. Read **Matthew 14:27–33** aloud.

But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

“Come,” he said.

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Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

- What do you notice about Jesus in this story (his timing, his words, his response to Peter sinking)?
 - What can we learn from how the disciples responded after the wind died down?
4. If you were to measure your spiritual growth not by achievement but by dependence on God, how "far along" would you say you are? What makes you say that?
 5. How might noticing Jesus more (and your own performance less) change the way you think about spiritual progress?
 6. If spiritual progress is about "God doing more in and through us," what's one small, concrete way you can make room for that this week (a quiet walk with no phone, a daily prayer of surrender, honest journaling, etc.)?

PRAY

Take prayer requests—especially around expectations, comparison, and patience with God's process—and then close in prayer. Here's a sample prayer you can use:

Heavenly Father,

When we feel like we're behind or disappointed in ourselves, remind us that you are still at work. Help us lean into your presence more than our own expectations. Amen.

BEFORE NEXT TIME

This week, when you hear yourself think, I should be further along by now:

1. Pause and notice it.
2. Ask: "According to whose measuring stick?"
3. Pray: God, I worship you. Thank you for working in me.

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To explore this topic further, read chapters 7-8 of *The Expectation Gap: The Tiny, Vast Space between Our Beliefs and Experience of God* by Steve Cuss.

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