

Family: Past, Present, and Future

Looking Beneath Our Expectations

Hi Revive Family,

This week we want to reflect on the expectations we bring into encounters with our family and loved ones. It is natural for us to have expectations when it comes to our family, and there are a few different things that can feed into these expectations, including:

- ◆ The assumptions we make, based on our past experiences and prior knowledge about one another
- ◆ How we interpret the actions of our family members
- ◆ What our underlying beliefs are about our family – both how we feel about them and what we imagine they feel about us

These ultimately result in us having certain expectations about interacting with each other, and this affects our own actions and behavior toward our family. And while we certainly need to have assumptions, interpretations, and beliefs about our family, the reality is that our assumptions, interpretations, and beliefs are not always accurate.

In this week's devotional, I share about the story of the brothers Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis. You can read about their story in Genesis, across chapters 25 through 28 and chapters 32 and 33). Most of us know the story that Jacob was forced to run away from Esau after stealing his birthright and blessing from their father Isaac. Many years later, when Jacob faces the prospect of seeing his brother again, his thoughts and his feelings are heavily impacted by his expectation that Esau still hated him. But we see that Esau was a changed man from when Jacob left him – and Jacob's expectations about that encounter ended up being based on false assumptions, interpretations, and beliefs.

So for us, let's take time to reflect about the kinds of expectations we have about our family.

Reflection questions:

1. When we think about interacting with our family this holiday season, what are some of the feelings that emerge? What do those feelings tell us about our expectations?
2. What are some of the assumptions that we may be making about specific family members and what it will be like to interact with them?
3. Think about some of our recent interactions that we have had with family in the past. How did we interpret those interactions? What did we walk away thinking after they happened?
4. What are the underlying beliefs that we may hold about our family – how we think about them, and what we imagine they think about us?
5. What do we think God's heart is for our family? How might it be similar or different from our way of thinking about them?