

UNEXPECTED

UNEXPECTED

LEAVE FEAR BEHIND, MOVE FORWARD
IN FAITH, EMBRACE THE ADVENTURE

STUDY GUIDE
FIVE SESSIONS

CHRISTINE CAINE

WRITTEN BY KEVIN AND SHERRY HARNEY



ZONDERVAN

Unexpected Study Guide

Copyright © 2018 by Christine Caine

This title is also available as a Zondervan ebook.

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

ISBN 978-0-310-08930-8

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Cover photography: Nate Griffin / @kanakanate

Interior design: Kait Lamphere

First Printing May 2018 / Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

<i>A Word from Christine Caine</i>	9
Session 1	
Expect the Unexpected.	11
Session 2	
Unexpected People	31
Session 3	
An Unexpected Assignment.	53
Session 4	
Unexpected Endings Bring New Beginnings.	73
Session 5	
Unexpected Resurrection	93
<i>Small Group Leader Helps</i>	113

OF NOTE

The quotations interspersed throughout this study guide and the introductory comments are excerpts from the book *Unexpected* and the video curriculum of the same name by Christine Caine. All other resources, including the small group questions, session introductions, and between-sessions materials, have been written by Kevin and Sherry Harney in collaboration with Christine Caine.

A WORD FROM CHRISTINE CAINE

Life is full of surprises, both good and bad. It can be full of unexpected twists and turns that we never saw coming. We can go from hearing a shocking diagnosis to welcoming our first grandchild. From having a rough day at the office to accepting a marriage proposal that evening. From facing an unexpected car repair to being offered a promotion. From planning a vacation to losing everything because of a hurricane.

The unexpected is one of the mysteries of life—something we have no control over but are guaranteed to experience almost every single day of our life.

None of us minds experiencing the unexpected when it's happy or inconsequential. But when the unexpected strikes fear in our hearts or is deeply painful it can throw us into such an emotional state that we find ourselves withdrawing from life and the people we love. In severe cases we even find ourselves stuck . . . unable to move forward.

In this five-session study you will hear God's tender invitation to accept his gracious call to trust him more—in the face of your pain. To move into a deeper intimacy with him than you have ever known—and let him heal your heart. To develop relentless faith so that the next time life throws you a curve ball—which life most certainly will—you will be able to navigate

your way through, still living the adventure he planned for you. And maybe even living a version of the adventure that's beyond what you could have ever imagined.

It's possible to learn how to live with a faith that is so confident in God, it can't be shaken—even when the ground underneath is giving way. That's what Abraham did. God extended to him the same invitation he extends to us—to trust with all his heart—and Abraham said yes—even though he had no idea where his *yes* would lead. He left the expected and stepped into the unexpected. He didn't know where he was going, who he would meet, or what it would cost. He didn't know any of the pain that might lie ahead. But he knew God would be with him. He knew God would guide him, protect him, and provide for him—and he refused to be shaken: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, *even though he did not know where he was going*” (Hebrews 11:8, emphasis added).

I believe we can live this expectantly. This hopefully. This freely. This faith-filled. In the face of *everything* that comes our way. Even in the face of the unexpected that invades our lives. Even in the unpredictable times in which we live. Even with all the chaos happening around the world.

I have no doubt you are part of this study because God has a life of adventure planned for you. I know he created us all on purpose, for a purpose—and he never wants fear of the unexpected or from the unexpected to hold us back. So, as you take part in this five-session study, as you allow the Holy Spirit to light your path, let's go together. Let's leave fear behind, move forward in faith, and embrace the adventure.

*With you on the glorious and unexpected journey of faith,
Christine Caine*

Session One



**EXPECT THE
UNEXPECTED**

INTRODUCTION

Kirk and Ashleigh were in their late twenties and already knew the heartbreak of bad news. After three years of tests, procedures, and tears, they sat with the doctor as he explained that they would not be able to conceive. They had reached the end of their medical options. They would have to adjust their expectations. Eight months later they were in the same doctor's office. Ashleigh had been sick for almost a month and the doctor sat them down with unexpected news. "I don't know how to explain this, but you are pregnant. You are three months along. Congratulations!" They did not see this coming.

Hank thanked all the guests for coming: family, friends, and work associates. As he walked out of the banquet hall he reflected on a wonderful career that had spanned five decades. All night people had asked him, "So, what will you do with yourself now that you're retired?" He was quick to show the picture of the beautiful motor home he and his wife had purchased and equipped for their two-year journey across the country. One morning the following week, as the sun arose, Hank got up to stretch and start his day. The stroke hit him with no warning. By the evening he was stable, alive, but his retirement plans had been radically redefined. He and his wife would be working on rehab and speech development rather than traveling and exploring the country. "Retirement" took a sudden and unexpected turn.

Tami packed her bags the day after her college graduation and started a two-thousand-mile trip across the country to an exciting summer job at a camp in the mountains. She had everything planned and scheduled.

Two months working at camp and then back home to start a career teaching somewhere near family and friends. The unexpected snuck up on her. In the first week of her short-term adventure she met the man she would eventually marry. To the shock of her family and friends, this small-town girl took a job teaching on the other side of the country, got married, started a family, and settled into a life in a place she had never dreamed of putting down roots. It was entirely unexpected!

The unexpected, along with its sorrow or joy, happens to all of us. Every day of our lives includes the opportunity for us to be pleasantly surprised with glorious good news or blindsided with the pain of bad news. This is the nature of life, both yours and mine.

TALK ABOUT IT

Tell about a time God surprised you with a renewed friendship, a great opportunity, or a much-needed breakthrough.

or

Tell about a time the unexpected was painful and hit your life like a wave you did not see coming.

We have not been called to control life, to endure life, or to barely make it in this life. Jesus came that we may know life and life more abundant.

VIDEO TEACHING

As you watch the video teaching segment for session one, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

Notes

When unexpected waves crash on the shore of your life

What you can expect in this *Unexpected* study

Called to an unexpected journey of faith

Life has its fair share of tragedy and hardship

Why some people do not expect to experience God's goodness

A story of heavenly blessing invades a "hopeless" life (Acts 3:1–10):

An invitation to expect more of God

The condition

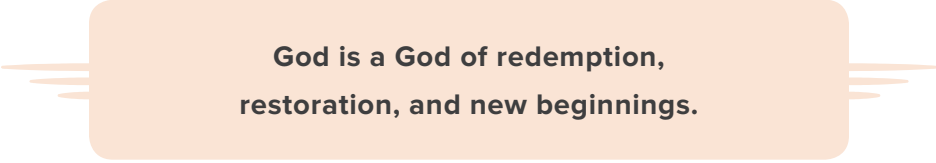
The need

The lifestyle

Learning to expect God's redemption, restoration, and new beginnings

Jesus is in the business of doing glorious and unexpected things

Believe God for the unexpected



**God is a God of redemption,
restoration, and new beginnings.**

VIDEO DISCUSSION AND BIBLE STUDY

1. Tell your group members which of the following three statements comes closest to reflecting how you live your life. Then, share how your life matches up to your expectations.
 - I tend to anticipate and brace myself for hard times, difficult situations, and struggles in life.
 - I tend to expect things to go well, my life to be blessed, and my heart will be filled with joy.
 - I don't really expect things to go good or bad; I just live life and see what happens.

2. Christine shares that some people *fear* the unexpected, *avoid* the unexpected, and *ignore* the unexpected. What are some of the reasons a person would approach the unexpected in any of these three ways?

Fear of the unexpected often paralyzes us and stops us from stepping into the fullness of the life that God has for us.

Read: Psalm 119:68; 2 Timothy 1:7; and John 10:10

3. Take a moment to pray and ask God to help you identify one or two good things he might want you to expect with bold faith.

Share one of these with your group and let them know how they can be praying for you to grow bold in expectation of God's goodness in your life.

Read: Acts 3:1–10

4. As you read this passage, what do you learn about the beggar, his condition, and his outlook on life?

We were never called to live predictable lives that are naturally possible. We are called to pursue a supernatural journey of faith.

5. The man in this story had a limitation that got in the way of him fully expecting God to work in a powerful and personal way. What is a limiting situation or condition in your life that keeps you from fully trusting God and expecting his best?

When God does the unexpected, he gets the glory.

Read: Hebrews 12:1–3

6. What are ways we can fix our eyes on Jesus and lift our faces to see him, even when life is challenging?

**Look up today, fix your eyes on Jesus,
and expect the unexpected.**

7. When the man in Acts 3 received God's touch and healing, he jumped and praised God. What are actual ways you can become a community who "jumps and praises God" when he does the unexpected in each of your lives?

**We often overestimate what people
can do for us, and underestimate
what God wants to do for us.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Spend time in your group praying in any of the following directions:

- Thank God for the unexpected blessings you have received.
- Pray for strength to be strong and trust Jesus when unexpected pain and sorrow come crashing into your life.
- Pray for courage to follow God on whatever unexpected journey he calls you to begin.
- Invite God to use your human “limitations” to turn your eyes toward him so you can receive all he wants to give you.

**God has so much more in store for you,
and instead of fearing the unexpected,
avoiding the unexpected, or ignoring the
unexpected, it is time to pray for, and
embrace the unexpected in our lives.**

BETWEEN-SESSIONS PERSONAL STUDY

MEMORIZE AND POST IT!

Commit Psalm 16:5–6 to memory:

⁵ LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.

⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Once you have done this, post it a couple of places: as a screen saver, on the door of your fridge, on the mirror in your bathroom, or another place you will see it frequently. Each time you look at this passage, unleash it in your mind and heart. Speak it aloud! Trust that he is leading you forward.

Let the truth of this Spirit-inspired declaration give you confidence and certainty that whatever unexpected event comes your way—whether good or bad—God is moving in and through your life.

**God does not always do what we want,
when we want, or how we want, but
he is always ready to do exceedingly
abundantly above and beyond anything
we could ever ask or think.**

BOLD EXPECTATIONS

In the passage you studied in this session the beggar was ready to receive far less than what God wanted to give him. The beggar was expecting some loose change, but God wanted to unloose him from his life of bondage and make him whole. God wanted to bless the man!

It is time for us to expect more from God. Make a list of *five* things you believe God might want do in your life, give you, or set you free from. Then, write a brief prayer of faith and expectation for each.

— 1 —

What I am trusting and expecting God to do, provide, or deliver me from:

My faith-filled prayer of expectation . . .

— 2 —

What I am trusting and expecting God to do, provide, or deliver me from:

My faith-filled prayer of expectation . . .

— 3 —

What I am trusting and expecting God to do, provide, or deliver me from:

My faith-filled prayer of expectation . . .

— 4 —

What I am trusting and expecting God to do, provide, or deliver me from:

My faith-filled prayer of expectation . . .

— 5 —

What I am trusting and expecting God to do, provide, or deliver me from:

My faith-filled prayer of expectation . . .

Believe God for unexpected blessings.

JUMPING FOR JOY

One way we can “jump for joy” is to express to God that we are truly thankful for what he has done in our lives. When we notice his unexpected goodness and tell him so, God takes delight.

Make a list of *five to ten* things God has done for you that were good, gracious, undeserved, and unexpected. You might want to start in your childhood and think forward through the years of your life:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

As you read this list, think of some way you can “jump for joy.” It could be singing a song of praise, writing God a note of thanks, sharing this list with someone, or even physically jumping for joy!

There is no reason for grace but grace.

What has God been teaching you through the thankfulness exercise you just completed?

If we allow God to, he will interrupt our lives and shatter our expected routines with his unexpected blessings.

JOURNAL

Use the space provided to write some reflections on any of the following topics:

- What can you do to grow your confidence that God can be trusted and that his unexpected plan for you is good—even when circumstances aren't?
- What can you learn from people you know who live a bold life of trusting God?
- What are ways you can celebrate God's unexpected goodness in your life?
- How can you teach the next generation that God has good and unexpected plans for their lives?

Many people experience a spiritual life far less than all that God has purposed for them, primarily because they do not expect the unexpected when it comes to the things of God.

RECOMMENDED READING

Read chapters 1 and 2 of *Unexpected* by Christine Caine to reflect more on what God is teaching you through this study.

Unexpected

Leave Fear Behind, Move Forward in Faith, Embrace the Adventure

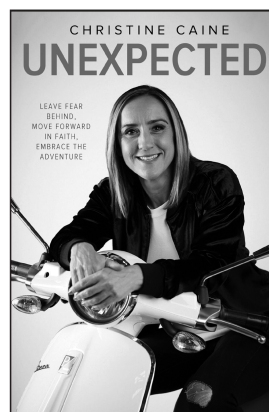
Christine Caine

Is it possible to have peace in an uncertain world? To not only expect the unexpected but embrace it?

Most of us want to have life under control. But God wants us to anticipate the unexpected with a faith deeply rooted in his goodness. He wants us to know that because he is in control, we don't have to be.

In *Unexpected*, beloved author Christine Caine helps us walk into the life God has for us—unknowns and all. Using dramatic examples from her own journey, Christine offers real-life strategies and biblical inspiration to help us move from fear and worry about ourselves to hope and trust in God. As we learn new ways to manage disappointment, strengthen our hearts, and build our faith, we can enjoy a new adventure with God that is more fulfilling than any day we spend trying to anticipate what will happen next.

Stepping into our God-given destiny means stepping into the unknown, but we can embrace that calling because God knows it already. Nothing in our lives takes God by surprise. So even in the midst of personal upheaval, relational challenges, financial stresses, family transitions, career disappointments, and chaotic world affairs, we can expect God to be good and do good. What other expectation do we need to have? Listen to God's dare to trust him in every unknown of your life today.



Available in stores and online!

 **ZONDERVAN**[®]
.com



ABOLISH SLAVERY EVERYWHERE, FOREVER.



A21.ORG



@A21campaign



@A21



@A21

Ignite your

PASSION.

Cultivate your

PURPOSE.

Realize your

POTENTIAL.

PROPEL WOMEN

For articles, videos and other free resources,
visit www.PropelWomen.org!



@PROPELWOMEN