

# HOW TO HANDLE THE “SHOULDs” PEOPLE PLACE ON YOU

A Reflection Guide

SHOULD  
HAPPENS

**We have all experienced the crushing weight of disappointing others — of letting them down.**

For example, it could be that as children, our parents put expectations on us for grades or sports. Many of us had felt the disappointment of a spouse when we didn't meet their expectations or from a child when we let them down. We have felt this at work where we have let down a boss or co-worker.

And, all of us can look back on our childhoods and remember a moment when we disappointed a coach, teacher, or parent. For many of us, that moment was a shaping moment in our lives.

But what do we do now with those expectations? Steve Cuss, who wrote a fantastic book called *Managing Leadership Anxiety*, said, "We need to discern what is ours to carry, what is God's to carry, and what is theirs to carry."

We all carry around the expectations from our lives – the disappointments we have experienced from others.

**But what should we carry?**

**What is ours?**

**What is theirs?**

**What is God's to carry?**

As we think about the “shoulds” others place on us, I want you to think about a specific example, a specific expectation someone has placed on you, or a situation where you have felt someone's disappointment. And as you do, I want to encourage you to walk through these questions to see what is yours to carry, what is theirs to carry, and what is God's to carry.

# 1. What is the expectation?

While this might seem like an obvious question, we often skip over this. What is the actual expectation? In relationships, we often miss each other or miss meeting each other's needs because we don't know what the other person wants. As we saw on Sunday in Mark 1, Jesus went to the other town after clarifying what the people and his disciples wanted.

## **2. Does God want you to meet it? Or can someone else (or God) meet it?**

Remember, in Mark 1, Jesus started with prayer. In prayer, that time with God, we begin to clarify what we are to do. As you have clarified the expectation, ask what God wants in this situation. It might not be the right time for you.

## 3. Do you want to meet it?

Throughout the gospel, Jesus knew what the people wanted, he knew what God wanted for him, and he knew when he didn't want to meet their expectations and when He did want to meet their expectations. Why? He had other goals. It doesn't make the people's expectations wrong, just wrong for Jesus at that moment. Some expectations that people have for us are not things we need to meet or want to meet, so knowing who God has created us and called us to be is essential.

## 4. Can you meet it?

This is the question about seasons and time.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he left villages, and other times, he stayed. He stopped at seemingly odd times to talk with people and heal them. Timing matters when it comes to expectations. You and I might do things today because of time available that we couldn't do five years ago. An empty nester might have more flexibility than a mom with young kids. Sometimes, people place expectations on us because they think we should handle it, but we know what we can or can't do, and it is crucial to be honest about that.

## 5. Should God carry this?

The things we know God should carry, that we can't, are in the areas of change. Often in relationships, we will try to change people or meet a need to change them. That isn't our job. That is God's job. Only God can meet some needs; even though people may place them on us, it is for God to meet them.

The series "Should Happens" was  
inspired by this book:  
*Should Happens* by Todd Clark.