

# Marriage Expectations

## Unmet expectations

*More marriages end because of unmet expectations than any other single reason. Satan uses unmet expectations to cause couples to give up hope.*

- We don't realize we have expectations until they aren't met!
- You may or may not be conscious of even having these expectations
- Too often one or both spouses have unrealistic expectations of how married life will be and when expectations are not met, they get disappointed, discouraged, and give up hope.
- Remember, you are human, and your spouse is not God! At some point in your marriage you will be disappointed with your spouse because we are all human and make mistakes!
- Marriage is like two worlds colliding together to form a new world.
- Expectations that are unspoken, unknown, or hidden from your spouse are like ticking time bombs. Their hiddenness may be a result of fears from the past, but they all explode!
- Men and women have different needs and each one is meant to fulfill different roles in the marriage. Also, each spouse may have different opinions about marriage.
- Your images of marriage are influenced by what type of relationship your parents and grandparents had and observations you may have made of other marriages with friends or relatives. They could also come from marriages portrayed in books, TV shows and movies, or from past marriages or relationships you may have already experienced.
- Sometimes even doctrines of men and religious beliefs can paint the wrong image of what married life will or should be like.
- Expectations can be based on something we think that we need or desire to be happy or satisfied. *Are your expectations God-centered or self-centered?*
- All of the above differences will lead to conflicts, disappointments and unmet expectations during the marriage. We need to allow God to form His image of how a beautiful marriage is meant to be.

## Change is a part of marriage

*Marriages are also affected by all of the external pressures, satanic attacks, temptations, financial situations, and other changes that happen during your years of life together.*

Change results from:

1. Your physical bodies will change, you may have children and grandchildren, friends and neighbors may change, your financial situation will change, your relationship with your parents will change as they grow older, job loss or change, and housing and other possessions will change over time.
2. Your relationship with God and each other will also change, hopefully for the better, as you learn more about each other and grow spiritually.
3. Your whole perspective on life and marriage may change over time as you learn more and mature in your Christian walk.

### Some Unrealistic Expectations

#### *Being married will stop the loneliness, boredom, hopelessness, or hurts.*

- Marriage will not rescue you out of a bad situation.
- You can be married and still feel alone or be hurt.
- You can still feel like married singles living parallel lives never experiencing intimacy with your spouse. All it takes is for your spouse to ignore you, become too involved in other activities, be insensitive to your needs, never do anything with you, or seldom communicate with you.

#### *My spouse will make me happy.*

- True happiness comes from giving, not receiving.
- It requires putting the other person's happiness before your own.
- Ask them, "What can I do to make you happy?" It is more blessed (or happy) to give than to receive.
- However, the law of sowing and reaping always works in a marriage! When you sow happiness, you will reap happiness in return, and you always receive more than you sow!

#### *Once I'm married, I will not have to be romantic any more.*

- The man must be the initiator of romance for the rest of your married life together.
- **Just as a woman enjoys romance before marriage, she needs the romance to continue after marriage too.**
- Most women expect their husbands to continue the courtship and romance after the wedding, and do not want to be the ones who initiate it.
- Without romance the relationship will stagnate and decline until the fire goes out.
- When a man does not initiate romance, it sends a relational message to his wife that she and their relationship are not priorities to him."
- The man needs to plan outings, date nights, romantic evenings, and other fun things to do together.

#### *My mate will meet all my love needs for the rest of my life.*

- You cannot come into a marriage expecting your spouse to meet all your needs, or you will be sorely disappointed.
- You may believe that your spouse will meet all your love needs that were not met growing up (nurturing love, safety, acceptance, and purpose). You may also believe that for your physical and emotional needs too.
- Your mate will not be able to help you escape a previously unpleasant situation or relationship, or take care of your loneliness, boredom, hopelessness, or fears.
- We must come into the marriage with the attitude of how can I meet my mate's needs, not what my mate can do for me.

#### *Men rule the house and are superior to women.*

- Yes, the man is to be the spiritual leader of the house. However, just putting a ring on her finger doesn't make you the spiritual leader.
- The man must win the trust and respect of his wife, and later the children, through his Christ-like behavior before he can take the position of spiritual leader.

## Marriage Expectations

- The husband makes the decision for the family, but he should consult his wife first and get her input because she sees the big picture and sees things from a different perspective from the man.
- The wife can only submit to her husband as he is submitted to Christ. She needs to feel safe being with him first.

***We are so much in love, know each other so well, and have so much in common that there will never be any major conflicts in our marriage.***

- To some degree we are all "messed up" because of what happened to us and who we lived with growing up.
- There will be conflicts just because of all the differences between every couple such as: male and female differences (physical and emotional), backgrounds, families, experiences, temperaments, attitudes, beliefs, etc.

***Women initiate sex and have a strong sex drive like men.***

- Making love is not like the movies or romance novels portray it. They were written by men and women living in some sexual fantasy.
- A man's actions about sex can be very selfish (that is his strongest need!)
- "Her job is to be there for me whenever I need it."
- A man should be the initiator of sex most of the time and the woman responds.
- A woman must be in the right mood to respond. She must be emotionally connected first. She brings everything that has happened during the day to the bedroom with her.

***Keep yourself in check emotionally. Ask yourself often,  
"Who is the one I am depending on, my spouse or God?"***

### **Roles of the Man and Woman in a Marriage**

***The husband is to live with his wife with understanding. 1 Pet. 3:7***

- He is to be the spiritual leader as he is yielded to the Holy Spirit and God.
- He must have a good relationship with his heavenly Father before he will be able to have a rich, fulfilling, joy-filled relationship with his wife.
- He must be sensitive to his wife's spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.

***The wife is to be the help meet for her husband. - She is not a servant, slave, or his mother!***

- God has especially equipped the woman to help the man become more Christ like.
- The Hebrew words for "help meet," *ezer kenegdov*, literally mean **Helping opposition!**
- "The man is the head, but the woman is the neck that turns the head!"
- The wife must help her husband through open and honest communication with him. This is not easy because of the nature of men to be defensive about their actions. They also have difficulty in receiving criticism or having their shortcomings pointed out to them.
- The world and some religious beliefs put pressure on the woman to remain submissive and silent having no voice.

### Unrealistic Expectations Can Come From Ungodly Beliefs About Marriage

Def. *Ungodly Beliefs are all beliefs, decisions, attitudes, agreements, judgements, expectations, vows, and oaths that do not agree with God, His Word, His Nature, and His Character.* (Kylstra's *Restoring the Foundations*)

*(Review the handout "Husband/Wife Complementary/Reinforcing Ungodly Beliefs")*

Ungodly Beliefs are formed in our mind through past experiences, what we hear, what we see, what we read, and the influence of wrong beliefs from others. They are dangerous because they affect all our perceptions, all our decisions, and all our actions.

### Bitter Root Expectation About Marriage

You can have Negative Expectations as a result of what you experienced with your parents as a child.

The home environment that you grew up in will influence your marriage. You will follow your parents unless you decide to change how you interact in your marriage!

**Example:** *There will always be quarrels, heated arguments, and conflicts in our marriage.*

You may have made Bitter Root Judgments against your parents or other marriages that will come to pass in your marriage if you do not break them and ask Jesus to fulfill the judgments.

**Example:** *You father used anger and yelling to get his way with your mother and that is the way you treat your wife even though you don't want to do it.*

***Because of sin, our past actions and the choices we have made, every one of us enters into marriage messed up!***

- We should always keep an attitude of being willing to learn and change throughout our whole life on earth.
- Love ***covers*** a multitude of sin.
- Love also ***overlooks*** the faults and weaknesses in the other person.
- Love ***cares*** about the needs of the other person.
- Love ***gives*** even when the other person doesn't deserve it!
- **True love is a sacrifice.**
- Love and making a marriage last for a lifetime ***takes effort***.
- We need to enter the bond of marriage wanting to help the other person to be transformed into Christ's likeness.

## 7 Steps Couples Should Take to Address Unmet Expectations

Willa Williams – marriage and family therapist  
Biola University, Center for Marriage and Relationships

Here are seven steps couples (and anyone else, for that matter) can take to turn the nightmare of unmet expectations into a genuine opportunity to grow their relationship and become teammates again!

1. **Identify your expectations** as well as your partner's.
2. **Try to see each other's perspective.** Validate you spouse's perspective and acknowledge that it is not necessarily better or worse than yours – it is just *different* and that's OK.
3. **Be willing to compromise.** Set aside your own desires and work to meet your mate's expectations, especially when they're different from your own. This is the perfect opportunity to put Paul's words into action:

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Phil. 2:3-4*

4. **Determine what are deal-breakers** for you versus things you can compromise on.
5. **Collaborate together** to determine how “we” want to handle these issues in “our” family from now on. Decide to approach it as *teammates* – not *adversaries*.
6. **Identify a solution** that will make it a win/win, then find a way to equally compromise or take turns compromising.
7. Then, **come back together** after a specified amount of time, **evaluate your solution** and **discuss** how it went for each of you. Then **make adjustments** as necessary.

*“Thank you for mowing the lawn each Saturday this last month (acknowledge the effort). I know it's a lot of work for you on your day off, so I really appreciate that you did it (show appreciation). How did it go for you? Was it helpful for me to do the edging while you mowed (willingness to compromise)? Is there anything you would like to do differently this next month (ask for feedback/input)?”*

By being aware of your own expectations, as well as your spouse's, and showing a willingness to not only compromise, but to put your mate's preferences ahead of your own, you'll avoid the frustrations and pain of unmet expectations and actually build a closer, stronger relationship.

## Worksheet Handout for Marriage Expectations

Unmet or unrealistic marriage expectations can become a huge source of conflict in a marriage, especially during the first couple years. However, some unmet expectations can fester over the years creating discouragement, depression, hopeless despair or thoughts of ending the relationship. Our image of what married life will be like can be influenced by what we see, hear, or read about as we are growing up, whether it be on TV, the internet, movies, the church, relatives, or other sources. You both will have different expectations, hopes, and dreams about marriage that need to be discussed and resolved before you get married. Problems often develop because we *assume* the other person shares our expectations.

To help in that process, we have compiled some questions and topics for discussion to help get the conversation going and where you can learn more about each other's thoughts and expectations. Before our next time to meet, discuss the following ideas and areas and see if you can come to some agreement about what might be realistic expectations that you both can work on together after you get married. This will require areas of compromise and possibly shifting your perspective to find some common ground. Don't try to do all the questions at once, and if things get too intense or emotions get stirred up, just set this handout aside and go have some fun together!

*Some of these may not apply to you. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and show you other areas to explore together too!*

### **Money**

- Are you a spender or saver?
- Are we going to have joint or separate bank accounts and money?
- Which one will manage our money, pay bills, investments, etc.?
- What will we spend our money on?
- When do we need to check with the other before spending money? Amount?
- What are saving goals?

### **Sex/Romance/Affection**

- How often will we be sexually intimate?
- What's Okay and what's not in the bedroom?
- What do you consider sexual and non-sexual touching?
- Talk about what would be romantic to each of you after you're married.
- How do you feel about public displays of affection?

### **In-laws/Extended family**

- How much time will be spent with them weekly, monthly, yearly?
- How involved will they be in our relationship? Set some boundaries!
- How will we divide holidays between yours and mine?

## Worksheet Handout for Marriage Expectations

### **Kids**

- How many do we want?
- Discipline styles?
- Activities they will become involved in?
- Childcare? Who will stay at home? Working arrangements? Daycare?
- What kind of schooling?

### **Household Responsibilities**

- Who does what? Gender stereotypes?
- Will we hire someone?

### **Organized or Disorganized**

- Do you see yourself as a highly organized person? Can't stand clutter or uncleanness?
- Tidy vs messy?
- Structured or free spirited?
- Planner or spontaneous?

### **Entertainment/Vacations**

- How do you like to relax? Do you like time alone, quiet, no distractions?
- What will we do for date nights?
- Do you like vacationing in mountains, beach, exploring new areas, history, natural environment?
- How will we spend our downtime? Productive or mindless?
- How will we balance hunting, fishing, sports with other activities?

### **Communications**

- talk about your communication style and how it matches or may conflict with our spouse's.
- How will we settle differences of opinion, needs, difficult situations?
- How do we establish a safe place for open and honest conversations on any topic?
- How can we stay open, responsive, and engaged even during difficult conversations?
- How are we going to resolve conflicts and stay in love?
- How can we have heart-to-heart conversations?

### **Spiritual**

- Who is going to be spiritual leader of the house? What will that look like?
- Where will we go to church?
- How much will we be involved in church and church activities? Volunteering?
- Will we pray together? How often?
- How will we encourage and build up each other's faith and stand together in agreement prayer?

### **Work/Career**

- Do both of you have career goals? If you both have full-time career goals, how will you prioritize those?
- Will you work overtime?
- How will you balance work and family time? What are your priorities between work, God, family, spouse, friends, and relatives?