

# Expectations



# ***Surrendering Our Expectations***

Expectations surround us in our roles as wives, mothers, church members, employees, Christians, and the roles we conjure for ourselves. We have expectations for others, that, when not fulfilled, can potentially become bitterness or dissatisfaction. Expectations for others and ourselves can come from various places: culture, church, role models, needs, wants, etc.

Some expectations are healthy in small doses and can be the method to drive us to positive improvement. In many cases, expectations can also be one huge mechanism we have allowed to steal our joy, muddy the Gospel, and distract us from what it means to live as children of Christ, a living example of Him—a living sacrifice.

## **Surrendering Our Expectations of Christ**

*John 9; John 10:9-10*

Jesus came into a sea of false expectations for His life. Many religious leaders in the story of healing the blind man in John 9, confused their own expectations. In this event, the religious leaders were chiefly concerned that Jesus

did not follow “the rules” when He healed on the Sabbath. Jesus’ actions did not fit their expectations, so they undermined His authority. Furthermore, when Jesus came, most were positive He would stop the oppression from the government. They were expecting Him to be a mighty warrior and conquer the world.

How curious that Jesus came to show that His grace and healing were greater than the laws of the Sabbath. How stunning of Him to appear in the face of those expectations as humbly as possible, in a feeding trough that would eventually lead Him to the cross.

Of course, Jesus did overcome when He arose, demonstrating He overcame anything we will face. If we accept Him on the condition that He fulfills *our* expectations instead of His own, we will miss what He created for us, victory over the circumstances of life and death.

His ultimate purpose was to make the Gospel a living thing that could be spread to those who were thirsting for something more than temporal victory: “...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

## Reflective Questions

In John 10:9-10, is there any question as to whether we can get to God by any other means?

When the angry religious leaders questioned the blind man about Jesus, he proclaimed, “ Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). Did the blind man know all the “answers” about Christ before he started spreading the Gospel?

Was the blind man’s first *Gospel message* successful and easy?

Should our perseverance in spreading the Gospel be solely dependent on the results we immediately see? Should our faith be dependent on the circumstances we are currently facing? Why/why not? (See Romans 8:18; Proverbs 19:21)

**Prayer:** Spend some time reflecting on your expectations in your relationship with Christ. Ask God to align *your* expectations for His purpose with His *actual* purposes. Ask for boldness and wisdom to proclaim Him with your life, actions, and words.

## Surrendering Our Expectations in Prayer

*Psalm 37:4; Isaiah 55:9*

My daughter has her favorites. She is “all about” her princess characters’ pets now. It delights me to see the glee on her face when she reads the books or dumps all the plastic puppies on the floor to play with them. However, I do know that playing with the app containing these characters on my phone 24/7 is not healthy so I have to restrict her time.

Although she would prefer it, I know playing with the plastic puppies should not take place of her sleeping. These rules sound like common sense to adults, but to her, all she sees is that mommy is taking away the only thing she ever really wanted.

I often relate her 2-year-old behavior to the daddy/daughter relationship we have with God. I think of the prayers I have prayed,

imagining how God will answer so He can see me delight in the answer, only to find in later spiritual maturity that His answer was more of what I needed than what I was originally asking for

Do not misplace my thought here, because God *does* delight in seeing our desires fulfilled; many times we do see our prayers answered, as we would imagine. Now, though, we live in a Christian culture that promotes using God and prayer time to increase our wealth, status, and belongings. If this is what we expect from our prayer life, then our joy is on the road to instant doom because it muddies our view of God’s glory and the message of the Gospel.

God expects prayer to be a time to pour our hearts out to Him, bring Him our petitions, meditate on His goodness, lead us to His Will, and listen to His answers – molding us into His purpose for our lives.

## Reflective Questions

Read Psalm 37:4. What is the stipulation in the first part of this verse for God giving us the desires of our hearts?

In your own life, have you noticed how your desires change when you are in closer fellowship with God?

See Isaiah 55:9. Even when we are in close fellowship with God, will we always be happy with or understand God's answers to our prayers? Explain.

**Prayer:** Thank God for the privilege of prayer and for His sovereignty over the answers to our prayers. Ask Him to help your focus and expectations for your prayer life to become centered more on His original purpose for prayer.

## **Surrendering Our Expectations in Others**

*Ephesians 2:5-6; Psalm 62:5*

Although we don't always realize it, we embrace expectations for our friends, role models, children, families, pastors, employers, and definitely our spouses. As humans, we possess a longing for someone to fulfill all these expectations. Sometimes relational expectations are fulfilled, but when they are not, we

tend to harbor feelings of anger, disappointment, dissatisfaction, heartache, and bitterness. Some could care less if they disappoint us, and that is probably the most hurtful realization of all. Unmet expectations are the source of some of the deepest hurts ever experienced.

People are not and never will be perfect, but the One who carved a place in our hearts for these longings and expectations is the very definition of perfec-



tion. He knows our expectations in others will disappoint us, so He beckons us to find full comfort and fulfillment in communion and fellowship with Him. Sometimes we tend to harbor relational expectations for others that belong to God. I wonder if God intentionally places others in our lives that

will fail us as a reminder of His unshakeable communion and un-failing character. Songwriter Ron Block wrote one of my favorite lyrics in relation to sacrificing our expectations in others to God: "I give my heart so easily to the ruler of this world, when the One who loves me most will give me all."

## Reflective Questions

Where should our sole trust and expectations reside, according to Psalm 62:5?

Is it easier or harder for you to run to Christ and His comfort when others disappoint you?

Read Ephesians 2:5-6. How do we come to a place where we "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"? Do you think it may require times of disappointment in others?

**Prayer:** Ask God to help you draw closer to Him in times of disappointment in others. Ask for His presence to be more real during those times. If you are currently facing times of disappointment in others, ask God to show you how He came to fill those gaps with His sovereignty and His holiness.

## Surrendering Our Expectations for Ourselves

*Matthew 11:28; Galatians 5:22-25; Matthew 25:20-21*

“Flying” down the mountain, I was on the verge of tears because I had been working tirelessly on an assignment that was extremely late while trying to entertain a cranky 2-year-old. To top it off (and to explain my “flying”), I was late to the first night of Bible school. Yes. Me. The youth pastor’s wife had failed to even make it to Bible school on time. I knew I had also left our home in an inexcusable mess.

Of course, my luggage wasn’t stuck in Kalamazoo, but I felt like I had done everything but lose my head that day. The precious thought flooded my mind that while God was dying on the cross; He looked ahead and saw I would have this petty-frustrating day. He knew I would need His grace and His presence, so He sacrificed His life.

You see, we tend to lose ourselves in our own expectations—our duties of clean homes; perfect timing, mothering, and wifely behavior. We somehow think these are the expectations God holds over our heads, too

***Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***

***Matthew 11:28***

With all of this piled on my conscience, a complete break down was in my near future. A small voice reminded me of lyrics in an Andrew Peterson song: *“Isn’t it love to look down from the sky, and see your only son on the cross asking why, and somehow let him die that way, and not call the whole thing off. All for this man stuck in Kalamazoo, who loses his bags and his way sometimes too, but that was something that you already knew, and still you died for me.”*

However, He is the Creator who knows more than anyone that we are not “wired” to always live up to our own expectations. We lose sight of understanding that grace is for more than the “big sins.” We also need grace in seeing our lives through God’s eyes, that our lives are more important than the list of tasks piling up in our heads. So, He died, and as He did, He chose to be actively present in comforting and redirecting our focus to His expectations.

## Reflective Questions

According to Matthew 11:28, what *are* God's expectations for us when we are feeling weak, stressed, or over-worked? How does that look? Why is it so hard to do this and accept God's offer of "rest" during these times?

Can we deliver completion of the expectations we have for ourselves in a way that will minister to others? (Galatians 5:22-25) In comparison, can we carry out these tasks in a way that could hinder others from knowing Christ?

**Prayer:** Ask God to gently remind you of His expectations for your life during overwhelming times (2 Corinthians 9:8). Ask for the fruits of the spirit while carrying out these tasks so they can become a source of ministry.

I love this quote I found in *The Woman's Study Bible* – ask God to help you remember this principle in your daily tasks: "She is of great value because God loved her - not because of what she does, but for who she is as His beloved daughter. The Lord loved her before she had a chance to accomplish or fail at anything."

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