



**Battle of the Sexes- Session 5  
Dealing with Expectations in Marriage  
February 7 and 10**

**Introduction**

***What was one thing about marriage that you grew up expecting to be true and found out later that it wasn't?***

***How did you respond to it not being true? What changed about your expectation?***

You might find yourself wondering if *your* early dreams of marital bliss were more illusion than reality. Why isn't marriage turning out the way you planned? In premarital counseling, couples often explore their expectations of marriage. But what does that mean? Are expectations the way you think your marriage *will* look, or the way you *want* it to look? The two can be very different!

**Transition:** Today we are going to discuss about how to deal with expectations in marriage and how to define/communicate proper expectations for our mates (and to learn for our future mates).

**1. Marriage is God's idea but takes place in a broken world and with two people still in process.**

Have a volunteer to read 1 John 4:7.

**Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God.**

John appealed for believers to love for two reasons. First, such love has its source and dynamic in God. Second, God is characterized by love. Both reasons blend together so that one runs into the other. The greatness of the divine love for us leaves us with an incentive to love one another. Our practice of love for one another provides evidence that God's love for us has attained its goal.<sup>1</sup>

***What's the connection between one's status and experience as a beloved child of God and John's frequently repeated counsel that his readers must love one another (3:11, 3:14, 4:7 and 4:11)? How does this relate to marriage?***

**Transition:** Not only do we need to learn about how to love others as God did, but also what it means to have a concern for others beyond our own needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Lea, T. D. (1998). [The General Letters](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 649). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Sermon Notes:

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## **2. Marriage is a tool used to help us get over being self-centered.**

Have a volunteer to read Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV) and Galatians 5:17.

**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

Galatians 5:17 (ESV).

**For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.**

In Philippians, Paul urged the church members to dismiss their pride and to live and serve together in unity. Anything less falls short of the gospel's standards. True unity will be realized by authentic meekness and selflessness, ultimately exemplified in the earthly life of Jesus. The attitude the church should exhibit was the one Jesus maintained.<sup>2</sup>

***Has there ever been a time that you did something that looked nice to everyone else but on the inside it was merely for personal pride? What does it look like to be humble in your marriage? What is one way that you can look for the interest of your spouse over yourself this week?***

In Galatians, to reject living for Christ is a tendency toward self-indulgence, which can express itself in destructive words and actions toward other believers. True spiritual freedom manifests itself in love, both for God and for one another. Such loving behavior is against the grain of the flesh. Thus, it is necessary to live in the power of the Holy Spirit and thus be guided by the Spirit in our attitudes, decisions, and actions.<sup>3</sup>

***What are ways that we live for the flesh in our marriages? How can these expectations come to light? How is living for someone else hard? What are ways to help focus on living for Jesus in your marriage?***

**Transition:** As we have seen that there is a call to remove our selfish desires in our relationships, there is also an expectation from God of what our marriages are to look like.

Sermon Notes:

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## **3. Marriage is a tool used to teach us to love like Christ and display Christ.**

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<sup>2</sup> Dockery, D. S. (1998). [The Pauline Letters](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 572). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Have a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (ESV).

**For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**

Have a volunteer to read Ephesians 3:20–21 (ESV).

**Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

In 2 Corinthians, Paul explained how no one should live for himself or herself but for Christ. Paul's job, like ours, was to proclaim the reconciliation accomplished by Christ. We who are the recipients of divine reconciliation have the privilege, like Paul, to be heralds to minister God's message throughout the world.<sup>4</sup>

***What are things that can control our marriage? How can these impact our marriages both positively and negatively? What does it mean to live in a marriage controlled by the love of Christ?***

In Ephesians, Paul asked that they comprehend Christ's love and be filled unto God's fullness. His confidence in prayer was grounded not in his abilities or his readers' but completely in God's abundant power. Astoundingly he claimed that God can do abundantly more than we can ask or even imagine.<sup>5</sup>

***What does it mean that God can do more in your life than you think or imagine? What does that look like in your marriage? How does having the right perspective impact how you pray for your spouse (or future spouse)?***

**Transition:** For our marriages to be grounded in what God desires, we have to remember the source of where true joy in marriage is found.

Sermon Notes:

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#### **4. Marriage is a tool used to remind us where hope is found.**

Have a volunteer to read John 16:33 (ESV).

**I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.**

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus serves as the intercession on our behalf before God, thereby eliminating the need for Jesus' direct intercession (thus not a contradiction of Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). Persecution will surely come, including trials from living in a fallen

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<sup>4</sup> Dockery, D. S. (1998). [The Pauline Letters](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 572). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

world, difficulties in life, and even discipline from God. But Jesus' words of comfort are paramount with His passionate plea to "take heart! I have overcome the world" (16:33).<sup>6</sup>

***Why is it not possible to have the love of the Father and not love your spouse? What should be the appropriate response to the love of God? How are these words from Jesus comforting for the marriage that has struggles and trials? How can they be challenging?***

### **Application**

1. Spend some time praying specifically for your spouse (or future spouse). Ask God to make sure that you do not put false expectations on your spouse. Make sure as well that you ask God to give you a love for your spouse like He has for you!
2. Find a way to encourage your spouse this week through a note, date, or some significant act. Help them to see that you aren't doing these things to receive love back but to demonstrate love to them.
3. If any of the discussion today challenged your expectations of your spouse and you realize a need to ask forgiveness for false expectations, spend time discussing with your spouse about these false expectations and find ways to help you grow together.

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<sup>6</sup> White, J. E. (1998). [John](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 485). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.