

# GOD YOURSELF WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

LIFE  
SPOUSE  
FAMILY  
MARRIAGE  
CHILDREN  
WOUNDEDNESS  
CIRCUMSTANCES  
TRANSFORMATION  
CHRISTIAN WALK  
RELATIONSHIPS  
FREEDOM  
VICTORY  
FINANCES  
CHURCH  
HEALTH  
JOB

Bill Loveless  
Christ Is Life Ministries



# **What Did You Expect?**

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***Bill Loveless***

***Christ Is Life Ministries***

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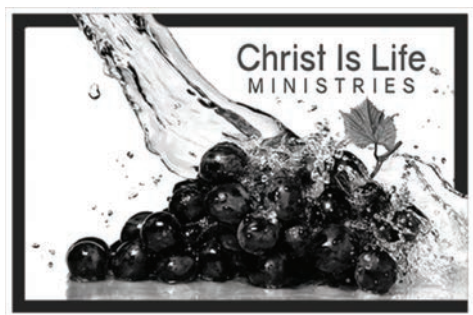
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# **What Did You Expect?**

## **Introduction**

The more I teach, disciple, and simply live the more I realize how many expectations I have about myself, God, others, and my Christian walk. As I began to think about all my expectations, I realized how they negatively impacted me when they were not met.

Take a moment and look at the front cover and as you go down that list think of any unmet expectations you might have. Would you agree that those unmet expectations have created some negative responses in you?

## **Who? What? Why? Where? When?**

If you are struggling to identify your expectations, think about what might be behind questions like these, especially when they are asked in a state of frustration:

- Who are you to be telling me what to do?
- What do I need to do to be loved by you?
- Why isn't my spouse meeting my needs?
- Where was God when this happened to me?
- When am I going to start experiencing changes in my Christian life?

Many of these questions and the resultant frustration stem from expectations that you think have not been met by others, by yourself or by God. Or just maybe the frustration is caused by others' expectations of you.

## **What Is The Overflow of Unmet Expectations?**

Here are some examples of feelings you might experience as a result of your unmet expectations.

Discouraged	Hopeless	Dejected	Wounded
Unloved	Helpless	Forgotten	Worthless
Rejected	Miserable	Inadequate	Burdened
Frustrated	Condemned	Resigned	Worried
Critical	Judgmental	Unhappy	Dismayed
Regretful	Angry	Abused	Inadequate
Displeased	Exploited	Spiteful	Vindictive
Confused	Bewildered	Trapped	Paralyzed
Troubled	Perplexed	Guarded	Neglected
Unworthy	Sorrowful	Empty	Melancholy
Anxious	Fearful	Resentful	Let down
Deceived	Lonely	Guilty	Powerless
Defeated	Insignificant	Judged	Ashamed
Insecure	Incapable	Vulnerable	Misunderstood
Unimportant	Deceived	Depressed	Overwhelmed

Can you relate to any of these feelings concerning your unmet expectations? What is the result if we stay locked into these feelings? How will they negatively affect our relationships or our walk with God?

We will be answering these questions as we go through the study. I will be asking you to refer to this list a number of times as you go through the booklet.

## **Summary of This Booklet**

Since the issue of unmet expectations is something we all face in many areas of life, I believe it is worth spending time studying. Therefore, here are the topics we will be looking at in this booklet:

- Defining expectations.
- What are realistic and unrealistic expectations.
- How unmet expectations negatively impact ourselves, our relationship with God and our relationship with others.
- Being aware of how Satan/demons use our unmet expectations against us.
- What it looks like to engage God to deal with our unmet expectations.

I pray, as you go through this booklet, the Lord will use it for His purposes in your life to transform you, heal you, and set you free.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Defining Expectations**

#### **Defining Expectations**

In context of this topic, I simply define an expectation as:

***A BELIEF that something will happen or will likely happen.***

Would you agree that our expectations flow from what we believe? For example, if I believe that you are a trustworthy person then my expectation is that I can trust you to keep confidential the things I say to you.

You may have heard me say this before, “You will not live beyond what you believe.” I believe the same is true of our expectations because our expectations flow out of what we believe to be true.

#### **The Difference Between Realistic and Unrealistic Expectations**

I put expectations into two categories for Christians: **realistic** and **unrealistic**.

***A REALISTIC expectation is one that lines up with God’s TRUTH; whereas, an UNREALISTIC expectation is one that is CONTRARY to what God says is true.***



An example of a realistic expectation is that God promises this in Philippians 1:6:

*“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will complete it** until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

This verse is telling us that God is the Source to transform our lives. As we depend/believe in Him to do that, we can expect Him to keep His promise.

An example of an unrealistic expectation based on a false belief is you believing that you are to be the source with God’s help to solve your problems, manage the outcome, or make life work. Why? Because we just learned that there is only one Source and it is God, not you.

In the upcoming chapters we are going to look at some realistic and unrealistic expectations that we have about God, our Christian walk, and about others.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Expectations Concerning God**

The good news about realistic expectations concerning God is that we have His word which tells us the truth about Himself. The second part of the good news is this:

***If you KNOW and BELIEVE His truth then YOU  
won't have UNREALISTIC expectations about God.***

The two key words concerning our expectations and God are: **know** versus **believe**. I define “knowing” as having intellectual knowledge of God’s truth versus “believing” which is trusting God’s truth to be true. (Remember that a non-Christian can “know” God’s word but without having accepted Christ, the unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit to enable him/her to believe it and have confidence that it is true.)

However, this is where the difficulty arises when it comes to God’s truth and our expectations. If you don’t know the truth then you will certainly have unrealistic expectations about God. But what if you know the truth about God but don’t believe it? The result is the same: unrealistic expectations concerning God.

Let’s me further explain this by looking at two key areas where most Christians struggle with God: His character and His promises.

## **1. Realistic and unrealistic expectations concerning God's CHARACTER.**

Let's look at what God says about Himself and relate that to our expectations.

### **a. God loves you UNCONDITIONALLY**

*"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" Romans 8:38, 39*

*"We have come to **know** and **have believed** the love which God has for us. **God is love....**" 1 John 4:16*

God loves you unconditionally. He can't do otherwise because that is His character according to 1 John 4:16. (Notice how John separates the words "know" and "believe" in this passage. It is not only knowledge, it is belief.) If you believe this, then you can realistically expect that there is nothing you can do or not do to prevent Him from loving you.

However, if you believe that God condemns you when you sin, then what will be your expectation? Will you be expecting to be punished by God? Is this expectation realistic or unrealistic? It is unrealistic because it contradicts God's truth. The truth is that God no longer condemns you no matter what you do. The truth is laid out in Romans 8:1:

*"So now there is **no condemnation** for those who belong to Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1*

How might having this unrealistic expectation impact you? You might see God as an angry judge ready to punish you whenever you sin. How would this adversely affect your relationship with God? You could not grow close to an angry, judgmental, and condemning God. You would always be trying to do whatever it takes to avoid sinning so that you wouldn't experience His judgment.

Do you struggle concerning God's love for you? How does it make you feel towards God or yourself if your expectations concerning God's love have not been met?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

## **b. God is GOOD**

*"For **the LORD is good** and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."*

*Psalms 100:5*

We see from this passage that part of God's character is that He is good. Knowing this intellectually, however, have you still asked these or similar questions:

1. If God is really good, then why does He allow bad things to happen to good people?
2. How could a good God allow a baby to be born in this condition?
3. Why does a good God allow so much pain and suffering in the world?

Think about it for a moment. Doesn't every one of these questions put unrealistic expectations on God's goodness? Why? Because they equate what God allows to who God is. The truth is that no matter what God allows, it does not change the truth that He is good.

If you put expectations on what God's goodness should look like that don't line up with the truth of who He is, it will likely result in your doubting God's goodness. Where could that eventually lead?

Do you struggle with God being a good God? How does it make you feel towards God or yourself if your expectations concerning His goodness have not been met?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

### **c. God is SOVEREIGN**

*"... the Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and  
**His sovereignty rules over all**" Psalm 103:19*

*"I make known the end from the beginning, from  
ancient times, what is still to come. I say: **My purpose  
will stand, and I will do all that I please.**" Psalm 46:10*

Let's start by defining "sovereignty." It means all things are under God's rule and control and there is nothing that happens without His direction or permission.

The good news is that God is not only good but He is in control. If you believe this truth, then you can have a realistic expectation that God is trustworthy thus allowing you to rest in Him and put your hope in Him regardless of what happens to you in the future, whether it be physical, financial, relational, etc.

However, is it possible that you have unrealistic expectations about God being in control if you have such

thoughts as, “If God is in control, why does this world or my life or my marriage, etc. seem out of control?” If you think God is not meeting your expectations concerning His sovereignty, then the tendency will be to take back control. Where do you think that will lead?

Do you have struggles with God’s sovereignty? How does it make you feel towards God or yourself if your expectations concerning His sovereignty have not been met?

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Are there any other expectations that you have with God’s character that have not been met? If so, how does it make you feel that they have not been met?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

## **2. Realistic and unrealistic expectations concerning God’s PROMISES.**

Let’s look at a few of God’s promises and some of the expectations associated with those promises.

### **a. God will HEAL you of your woundedness**

*“He **heals** the brokenhearted and **binds up** their wounds.”*

Psalm 147:3

This is a wonderful promise of God. No matter how you were wounded or the depth of your woundedness, God promises to heal. Because it is a promise we can expect God to keep it.

However, what if you don't believe this promise. You might say, "I can never be healed because of how badly I was abused." Or "I feel responsible for my woundedness and because of that, I am unworthy of being healed." By these statements aren't you adopting unrealistic expectations about God's ability to heal you? What is the result? You live in your woundedness and are never healed.

If you struggle in this area, is God meeting your expectations for healing? If not, how does it make you feel towards God?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

**b. God will set you FREE.**

*"And you will know the truth, and **the truth will set you free.**" John 8:32*

*"Jesus, said to Him, "I am the way, **THE TRUTH,** and the life....." John 14:6 (Emphasis mine)*

Since every one of us is in bondage to something (primarily to self), then this is a wonderful promise from the Lord. As a result, we can expect the Lord to move us towards freedom.

However, an unrealistic expectation is that God is going to totally set you free from all your strongholds, fleshly behaviors, etc. The truth is that God may set you completely free of some things. But He may not free you of everything for several reasons: (1) your fleshly behaviors never cease to exist; (2) the depth of the grip

they have on your life; or (3) He will allow an issue to continue being a struggle in order to keep you dependent on Him.

If you struggle in this area, how does it make you feel that God has not met your expectations concerning freedom?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

**c. God will TRANSFORM you.**

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18*

The promise to transform you into the likeness of Christ is one of God’s key promises. As a result, you can realistically expect God to transform you to think, feel, choose, behave, and believe like Jesus.

However, in my time of ministry I find that folks put unrealistic expectations on God’s transformation process. The most common unrealistic expectation is about God’s timing. I don’t know about you but I want transformation now, not days, weeks, months or years from now. God never seems to meet my timetable. How about you?

Here are some other unrealistic expectations I hear most often, “I want to know how God is going to change me.” “I don’t want there to be any pain or suffering in this process.”

These expectations are unrealistic because God is never going to tell us His timetable. He is never going to



share with us His process of transformation and yes, there will be pain and suffering as part of the transformation process.

If you struggle in this area, how does it make you feel that God has not met your expectations?

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What are some other areas that you have unmet expectations concerning God's nature or His promises?

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How does it make you feel about those unmet expectations?

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Expectations About Yourself Concerning Your Christian Walk**

Let me give you some examples of unrealistic expectations that I have heard from Christians over the years. Remember as you read this section, that unrealistic expectations are those that don't line up with God's truth.

#### **1. If I am saved, why do I still sin?**

What is the unrealistic expectation? That salvation should eventually lead to a sinless life. You might draw this conclusion when you look at Romans 6:6:

*"... knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that **our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.**"*

However, even though the sin nature has been crucified or done away with, we still have the flesh dwelling in us. Paul shares this truth in the following verse:

*"For I know that **nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh;** for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. **For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.**"*

*Romans 7:18-19*

The flesh is constantly drawing us to live independently of God. When we give into the flesh, then we will sin. The good news is that the longer you walk more consistently in the Spirit, the less you will sin.

If this expectation is something that you have struggled with, how has it made you feel about yourself and/or your Christian walk?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

**2. Since I have been living in Christ for so many years, why do I still struggle with \_\_\_\_\_?**

The unrealistic expectation is that the longer I live from Christ as the Source then at some point I should no longer struggle with some fleshly behavior(s).

Let me use my Christian walk to answer this question. My core struggle in my Christian walk is feelings of inadequacy. I have been walking in Christ since 1998 and I still struggle with it. In the beginning, it was overwhelming and it totally controlled my life. However, the difference is that my feelings of inadequacy now are more like a cold in that they come and go periodically but they no longer control me.

The good news is that as you increasingly live in dependence on Christ, your life is being transformed according to Romans 12:2:

***“And do not be not conformed to this world but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind....”***

***Being transformed means that it a LIFE LONG  
PROCESS that will result in you struggling  
LESS AND LESS with some fleshly behaviors.***

If this expectation is something that you have struggled with, how has it made you feel about yourself and/or your Christian walk?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

### **3. I will finally arrive spiritually.**

You may believe that there is some sort of “spiritual” finish line that you can cross if you walk long enough living dependent on Christ. Some of the results I have heard is that if you cross this finish line, there will be:

- Complete transformation
- No more conflict.
- No more suffering.
- No more struggle with the flesh.

This is unrealistic because there is no spiritual finish line other than death. The truth is that living in a fallen world and a fallen body surrounded by fallen people means there will always be a need for transformation; there will be conflict and suffering; and there will always be struggles with the flesh.

The good news is that in the midst of these things, we can live with Christ’s peace, rest, confidence, joy, victory, etc. We see this with Paul when he says in 2 Corinthians 12:10:

*“Therefore **I am well content** with **weaknesses**, with **insults**, with **distresses**, with **persecutions**, with **difficulties**, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*”

Paul is saying that the greater reality for him than his distresses, persecutions, and difficulties is that he is experiencing Christ's contentment.

***Therefore, there will be NO arrival this side of heaven, but you can experience ALL that Christ has to offer (i.e. His peace, rest, joy, etc. in spite of your struggles.***

If this expectation is something that you have believed, how has it made you feel about yourself or your Christian walk?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Expectations For Others**

Let's look at how our expectations impact our marriages, families, friends, and co-workers.

#### **1. Expectations about your SPOUSE/MARRIAGE.**

As I have discipled many married couples, I have found that one of the foundational issues of their conflict is unmet expectations. As in our Christian lives, we come into marriage with realistic and unrealistic expectations. Here are the ones that I hear about most often:

##### **My spouse:**

- **Will make me fulfilled and happy.**
- **Will love me unconditionally.**
- **Will accept me unconditionally.**
- **Will make me secure.**

If you had any of these expectations going into marriage, have they been met so far? The truth is that none of these expectations is realistic because these are needs that only Christ can meet not your spouse. In other words, only Christ can love you and accept you unconditionally, and fulfill you and make you secure. As we live in an abiding relationship with Christ, then we can allow Christ to meet those needs in us and, in turn, He will meet our spouse's needs through us.

However, if we believe that it is up to our spouse to meet those needs, then we hold him/her responsible for doing so. If they fail (which they will), then our flesh says,

“I have the right to not love back or I have the right to reject my spouse.”

There can also be some unrealistic expectations that seem realistic because they sound biblical. Here are some examples:

Since my spouse and I are both Christians and are seeking to be one in Christ:

- We should be going to the same church.
- We should pray together daily.
- We should share our struggles with one another.

Because they sound biblical, then we have an even greater expectation that they should be met. What happens if expectations like these are not met?

Think about your spouse and your marriage for a moment and answer the following question. How does it make you feel when your spouse does not meet your expectations?

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(Choose from the list on page 4)

## **2. Expectations about your KIDS.**

We all have expectations about our kids. Some realistic expectations are:

- They would come to salvation.
- They would understand Christ as their Source.
- They would understand their true identity in Christ.
- They would share Christ with others.

These are realistic in that this is what the Lord desires for all of us, i.e., it lines up with God's truth. However, maybe your kids are grown and none of these desires has been fulfilled. One reaction may be that you condemn yourself for not being a better parent or for not being a more Christ-centered parent.

Perhaps you weren't even a Christian while raising your kids. What if they are still unbelievers as adults? You could have regrets because you had no chance to give them the gospel when they were children.

Note: God created our children with free will. That they haven't met your spiritual expectations doesn't mean that Christ is not responding to your prayers or working on their hearts. Nor does it mean that you have failed as a parent.

Please take a moment to answer this question about your kids. How does it make you feel if your kids have not met your expectations?

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## **2. Expectations about your FRIENDS.**

We all have friends and with those friendships come expectations. For the most part, those expectations increase the closer the relationship.

For example, you expect a very close friend to be more trustworthy than a friend who is not as close. You might have expectations that your close friends will be accepting, honest, loving, caring, etc. (Especially if they are Christians.) The problems arise when your friends fail to meet your expectations. What if you are vulnerable



with your close friend about a very personal issue and they end up rejecting you or condemning you or betraying your confidences? How would that make you feel?

We can also put unrealistic expectations on our realistic ones. By this I mean, that we can expect not only to be accepted and loved by our Christian friends, but we have unrealistic expectations when we only want to be accepted and loved in certain ways.

If our friends don't measure up to our expectations, then we might to be critical or judgmental of them. What if your friend offends you? This could produce unforgiveness and eventual bitterness towards that friend. Therefore, look at your friendships for a moment and answer this question.

How does it make you feel if your friends (former friends) have not (did not) met your expectations?

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Other Expectations**

We can also have expectations about our things such as our job, our finances, our church, etc.

#### **Expectations About Your Job**

When it comes to your job, a realistic expectation is that the Lord is going to provide. He says that He will meet your needs in Philippians 4:19. However, we can have unrealistic expectations about our jobs, such as:

- I will be successful.
- I will be secure.
- I will be promoted.

What are some of your expectations concerning your job? If none of these expectations is being met, how does it make you feel? If you are in what you think is a dead end job, how does that make you feel?

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#### **Expectations About Your Finances**

I believe all of us want to be financially secure. However, what if you have been unable to reach that goal so far? What if you have had to go bankrupt? What if you are near retirement age and you realize that you don't have enough money saved to retire?

How does it make you feel if you have not met your financial goals?

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## **Expectations Concerning Your Church**

When it comes to the church you attend, do you have some unmet expectations? You may not like the music, or the length of the pastor's sermons. Or maybe you go to a church that doesn't have the right programs or a good children's ministry. Or the leadership is more business-oriented than spiritually-oriented. I think we all have expectations for our church.

Think about this for a moment:

***If your expectations about your church  
DON'T line up with God's plan can they be  
REALISTIC expectations?***

The truth is that God has a plan for your church. He has called you to that church to fulfill His plan. Therefore, if your expectations don't line up with His plan then they are unrealistic expectations.

I have discovered over the years that I have a lot of opinions about my church but the Lord has told me on many occasions that if my opinions or expectations don't line up with His will, then He is not interested in them.

How does it make you feel towards your church when your expectations are not met?

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **The Results of Your Unmet Expectations**

#### **Satan's Strategies Concerning Your Unmet Expectations**

##### **The Results of Your Unmet Expectations**

There are a number of results of unmet expectations but I want us to focus on two key points.

##### **1. Unresolved unmet expectations lead to FLESHLY BEHAVIORS.**

Take a moment and look over your responses to all the categories of expectations that we previously discussed. What were some of the words you used to describe how you felt about your unmet expectations: Perplexed? Frustrated? Inadequate? Rejected? Here is the key question concerning your unmet expectations:

##### **What will be the results if you fail to deal with those feelings?**

There is nothing wrong with feeling any of these things concerning our unmet expectations because emotions are part of our human makeup. However, if we let those feelings linger and do not engage God to deal with them this will be the result:

***FLESHLY BEHAVIORS towards God, yourself,  
others, and your Christian walk.***

Let me explain by giving examples from each of the categories we have discussed concerning unmet expectations.

**a. Unmet expectations concerning God's character.**

Let's assume that you are struggling with believing that God loves you unconditionally regardless of what you do or don't do. You feel unworthy of His love and conclude that you must work harder for Him to earn His love. At some point, all your doing doesn't seem to be enough and you get angry with yourself and/or you get angry with God.

Are you experiencing any fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations concerning God's character?

**b. Unmet expectations concerning God's promises.**

Let's assume that you are frustrated by God's transformation process. If your frustration is not dealt with then you begin to doubt God's ability or willingness to transform your life. As the doubt increases, you get to a point where you give up on God ever being able to change you.

Are you experiencing any fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations concerning God's promises?

**c. Unmet expectations concerning your Christian walk.**

Let's assume that you expected to be totally free of your anxiety because of how long you have been walking

dependent on Christ. However, since you are still struggling with it, you begin to wonder if you are doing something wrong or if you need to do something else other than continuing to depend on God to set you free.

If this feeling goes unchecked, then you become frustrated towards God and/or yourself. The result is that you start using your self-effort and self-discipline to free yourself of your anxiety and you become stuck in an anxiety trap.

Are you experiencing any fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations concerning your Christian walk?

**d. Unmet expectations concerning your marriage.**

Let's assume that your spouse is not meeting your expectations in affirming you. As a result, you start feeling rejected. As your rejection grows, you begin to feel angry which eventually leads to bitterness towards your spouse.

Are you experiencing any fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations concerning your marriage?

**e. Unmet expectations concerning your job**

Let's assume that have worked harder than your peers to earn a promotion. You walk into work one day, only to discover that someone less qualified got the promotion. Your frustration turns to anger with the result that you become vindictive towards the person who was promoted.

Are you experiencing any fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations concerning your job?

## **f. Unmet expectations concerning your church**

Let's assume that you are not happy with the new direction of the church because your expectation was that it would continue going in the same direction. You begin to be frustrated with the leadership and this leads to telling others of your displeasure. As you find more people to agree with you this eventually leads to division within the church.

Are you experiencing any fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations concerning your church?

I hope these examples have helped uncover some fleshly behaviors that you are experiencing concerning your expectations. Let's now take a look at some of Satan's strategies concerning your unmet expectations.

## **2. Unresolved fleshly behaviors can lead to fleshly STRONGHOLDS.**

If the fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations are not dealt with they can lead to strongholds. I simply define a stronghold like this:

***A stronghold is a REINFORCED flesh pattern or behavior that has a very strong GRIP on your life.***

For example, your expectation is that your spouse will be affirming. However, he/she is not meeting your expectation with the result that resentment begins to build up in your heart. If that resentment is not dealt with then that resentment can eventually become a stronghold of bitterness.

## **Satan's STRATEGIES and Your Unmet Expectations**

As we well know, the three-fold strategy of the enemy is to steal, kill, and destroy your walk with Christ (John 10:10). He accomplishes this primarily in two ways:

### **1. His strategy is primarily carried out through your THOUGHTS.**

Since Satan can insert thoughts into our minds, he will insert deceiving, tempting, and condemning thoughts. Let's look at how he inserts thoughts to tie in with your unmet expectations.

#### **a. Inserting thoughts in your mind that are in FIRST person.**

The key truth to remember concerning Satan and your thought life is this:

***When Satan INSERTS thoughts into your mind, they are always in FIRST person.***

For example, let's assume that your expectation for your spouse to love you unconditionally is not being met. It is becoming a real source of frustration. If Satan inserts a thought, it won't be "You are frustrated with your spouse." Rather, it will be in first person: "I am frustrated with my spouse."

You may think that thought came from you when in fact it was Satan that inserted that thought. Therefore, Satan can deceive us into believing that his thoughts are yours.



**a. Inserting thoughts in your mind that REINFORCE your feelings about your unmet expectations.**

Let's assume that you are discouraged because you have been living dependent on Christ but you have not yet been able to forgive the person that abused you. You might be thinking, "When is God going to set me free from my unforgiveness towards this person?"

Satan will insert parallel thoughts to reinforce your discouragement. Thoughts such as, "I am getting frustrated because God is not coming through," or "I wonder if God really wants me to be set free."

This strategy is like a fumble in football. Everyone goes after the ball and piles on one another. Similarly, Satan wants to pile lies on by inserting many reinforcing negative thoughts on you.

**2. Satan works in cooperation with your FLESH.**

Satan knows that your flesh is the gateway to defeating you. He also has a history of all your fleshly tendencies since your birth. Therefore, he will always be exploiting your flesh when it comes to your unmet expectations.

For example, let's assume that you struggle with rejection. You just found out your best friend was talking about you behind your back. Your expectation is that you could trust your friend to keep your confidences. You immediately feel rejected. Satan, knowing your weakness, will insert multiple thoughts to stir up your feelings and encourage you to react in the flesh.

Satan might insert thoughts such as, “I can’t believe my best friend would do that. I will never trust my friend again.” As a consequence, you look for ways to retaliate or reject your friend.

### **3. Satan works through your UNBELIEF.**

Satan has a good understanding of what you believe and what you don’t. Therefore, he will work against you by working through your unbelief. One of Satan’s main strategies is to get you to doubt God’s character.

For example, you know, because the Bible says it several times, that you are righteous in Christ as part of your true identity. However, because of your fleshly behavior, you struggle with believing that you are righteous.

Therefore, the enemy, knowing your struggle, may insert thoughts like this, “I can’t be righteous because I just looked at pornography,” or “How could I be righteous because of what I just did?”

Therefore, be aware that the enemy has one objective when it comes to your unmet expectations:

***To turn you AWAY from God and turn you back to your FLESH to deal with your unmet expectations.***

I hope this section has been helpful in seeing the results of your unmet expectations as well as Satan’s strategies to keep you in bondage to your flesh. In this last chapter, we will look at key truths of engaging God for Him to deal with our unmet expectations.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Engaging God To Deal With Unmet Expectations**

#### **Introduction**

The truth is that we are never going to get away from expectations, even unrealistic ones. Whether they are realistic or unrealistic, expectations are a part of life. The problem comes when they are unmet because they have the capability of producing short and long term damage to our soul, to our walk in Christ and to our relationship with God.

In order to avoid that, let's look at some key truths that we can use to engage God to deal with the fleshly thoughts and feelings that result from our unmet expectations.

#### **Engaging God To Deal With Unmet Expectations**

##### **1. Take captive the THOUGHT or FEELING associated with the unmet expectation IMMEDIATELY.**

*"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and **we are taking every thought captive** to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5*

I often ask the question, "Do you think about what you think about?" I get puzzled looks when I ask that question because for the most part we don't think about what we are thinking. We simply let those thoughts into our minds without questioning them.

Can you imagine living in a heavily crime-ridden neighborhood and deciding to take your front door off the hinges and put it in the garage. You now have no protection from anyone who wants to come into your home. Of course you would not do that because it is a crazy thing to do.

However, I see many Christians who have done just that with the door to their minds. They have taken the door off the hinges and welcome any and every thought into their minds.

When the initial thought or feeling associated with your unmet expectation comes up, the tendency is to let it automatically into your mind and then start dwelling on it.

For example, if you felt rejected in some way by your spouse because they didn't trust you with the finances, what do you think would be the result if you let that thought into your mind and continued to dwell on that feeling of rejection?

This is why Paul emphasizes the importance of taking every thought captive. Therefore, let's put the door to our mind back on it's hinges, install a deadbolt, and a peephole and start taking every thought captive.

Here are three spiritual exercises that I hope will help in you taking your thoughts captive:

#### **a. Question the ORIGIN of your thoughts**

Instead of taking ownership of that thought or feeling, stand back from it and ask the question: "Where did that

thought or feeling come from? The flesh, Satan, or the Holy Spirit?"

For the most part, the origin of the thought will be obvious but by asking the question you delay reacting immediately to your flesh.

For example, let's assume that you have been faithful in praying for your spouse's salvation for some time. We know that because God wants all to be saved that this is a realistic expectation. However, after all the time spent in prayer, he/she has yet to accept Christ. A thought comes to mind like this, "Does God really care if my spouse is saved or not. Why won't He answer my prayers?"

Instead of dwelling on that thought, think about where that thought came from. Going back to my door analogy, instead of opening the door when someone knocks, you first look through the peephole and see who it is. It is the same with your mind. Before opening the door, ask yourself or God where that thought is coming from.

***Since our flesh is always ready to quickly REACT, it is ESSENTIAL to question every thought and feeling.***

**b. COMPARE your thought or feeling with God's truth.**

In addition to questioning the origin of the thought, I believe the second most critical thing we can do is compare that thought or feeling with God's truth.

I call this using your "spiritual" peephole because before I entertain that thought, I am going to see if that it

lines up with God's truth. If it doesn't, then I am going to reject it. If it does, then I will open the door and let it in.

For example, your expectation was that you were going to be promoted at your job. However, you walk in the office one day only to find out that someone else was promoted over you. The first thoughts that come to mind are, "I worked hard for this promotion. I deserve it. Since I didn't get it, I have the right to get angry."

**Comparing those thoughts with the truth.** In that same example, before entertaining that thought and getting angry, compare it to God's truth. The truth is that God did not guarantee you a promotion. You did not get the promotion because God in His sovereignty did not allow it. However, since God is good and He is for you then there was a good reason why God didn't allow it. Therefore, you don't have the right to get angry.

Therefore, always use your "spiritual" peephole to question whether or not those thoughts and feelings line up with God's truth.

Think about an unmet expectation and the associated fleshly thoughts and feelings. Write down God's truth concerning those thoughts and feelings.

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**c. SPEAK God's TRUTH into that fleshly thought or feeling.**

I don't know if you are familiar with the term "spiritual self-talk." I define it as speaking God's truth into a fleshly thought or feeling. It can be speaking that occurs

only in your mind or speaking God's truth out loud. I have found this very effective in disarming fleshly thoughts.

For example, you are struggling with God being good because you have been faithful in seeking Him to set you free from your long-held fears but you are not experiencing any change. As a result of that unmet expectation, thoughts start coming into your mind such as, "God promised to set me free. Why am I not experiencing any freedom? If He were a good God, He would honor His promises."

**Speaking the truth.** Spiritual self-talk in this example might sound like this: "The truth is that God is working because that is the promise of Philippians 1:6. Even though I am not experiencing any change, by faith I believe that He is setting me free. The truth is that God is good regardless of whether or not He has met my expectations. Therefore, I will continue to walk by faith and trust that He is setting me free."

Do you see how quickly speaking God's truth into this issue might defuse that fleshly thought or feeling? Self-talk is something that I use all the time to keep me from taking ownership of my fleshly thoughts.

Using the unmet expectation you used from the last section, speak God's truth that you wrote down into those fleshly thoughts and feelings. What would you say?

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#### **d. ENTRUST that thought and/or feeling to God.**

Let me share with you how I define the word "entrust" as it relates to expectations

**ENTRUST:**

***GIVING OVER to God your fleshly  
thoughts and feelings associated with your  
unmet expectations.***

Think of your fleshly thoughts as a piece of burning charcoal. If you pick up that piece of charcoal, what is going to happen if you don't drop it immediately? Second and third degree burns. The same is true of your fleshly thoughts and feelings. You can't afford to hold on to them because they have the potential of creating third degree burns in your soul (i.e. ongoing fleshly thoughts and feelings).

Think about these two reasons why you should entrust your fleshly thoughts and feelings to God. One reason is that you are not capable of dealing with those thoughts apart from God and His power. Secondly, by immediately entrusting those thoughts to Him you have given God ownership of those thoughts.

What happens when you entrust those thoughts to God? Here are some things I have experienced when I entrust my fleshly thoughts to God:

- He inserts truthful thoughts into my mind.
- He uses His power to keep my eyes fixed on Him and His truth versus taking ownership of my fleshly thoughts.
- I enter into Christ's peace and rest because I am no longer holding onto those fleshly thoughts and feelings.



Let me use an example to illustrate. I had a close friend who said some things about me that were very painful. His remarks were a subtle attack on my integrity and my heart. In that moment, I felt rejected and I believed I had the right to defend myself.

In the past, there is no doubt that I would have lashed out at my friend. However, in this situation depending on God's power, I immediately entrusted those thoughts to God. As a result, I didn't respond negatively to my friend since I was able to compare what he said to the truth and choose not to defend myself.

Using the unmet expectation you used from the last section, what fleshly thoughts or feelings do you need to entrust to God?

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### **Final Example For Taking Thoughts Captive.**

Let me use one example that incorporates the four principles that we just discussed.

Let's say you have a loved one that is dying of cancer and you have been praying for healing. Assume that you have an expectation that God, being good and in control, will save him/her from dying. Your loved one dies and in that moment anger begins to well up in your heart. You begin having these thoughts, "God did not answer my prayer. I really expected that God was going to save my loved one. He can't let this happen and call Himself good."

**Question the thoughts:** “Was that thought from the Spirit or was it from my flesh or Satan?”

**Compare those thoughts with the truth:** The truth is that God’s goodness is not based on circumstances that God allows or does not allow. Our days are numbered according to the Lord and He has the right to determine the time for your loved one to be with Him.

**Speak truth into your fleshly thoughts:** “While I grieve over the loss of my loved one, I know that God’s timing is perfect. I was faithful in praying but God’s will must prevail.

**Entrusting your fleshly thoughts and feelings to God:** “Therefore, I am entrusting my angry feelings to God and I am choosing to believe that He is good and that I don’t have to get angry.” Remember that feelings can’t be turned off instantaneously, but as you continue to entrust them to God, they will subside.

I hope this section on taking your thoughts/feelings captive will help you practically in engaging God’s truth and power to deal with your unmet expectations. There is another truth that I would like to share that I trust will help you in dealing with unmet expectations.

## **2. PUT TO DEATH or MOVE AWAY FROM your unrealistic expectations**

*“... for if you are living according to **the flesh**, you must **die**; but if by the Spirit you are **putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.” Romans 8:13*

There is something more God wants to do in you in the long term concerning your unrealistic expectations.

**God eventually wants you to DIE TO or MOVE AWAY  
FROM having UNREALISTIC expectations.**

That is what part of the meaning of the verse above when it says, “... *putting to death the deeds of the flesh.*” In this passage, putting to death the deeds of the body includes your unrealistic expectations. How do we do this?

There are three truths to consider in answering that question.

**a. LEARN/KNOW God’s truth.**

*“I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because **you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.**” 1 John 2:21*

The first key step in dying to your unrealistic expectations is to learn/know God’s truth. By learning the truth, you can compare it to your expectations and realize when they truly are unrealistic. However, we learned earlier that learning the truth is not the same as believing the truth. Therefore, you need to:

**b. Seek the Spirit to renew your mind to BELIEVE the truth.**

*“In Him, you also, after **listening to the message of truth**, the gospel of your salvation—**having also believed**, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”  
Ephesians 1:13*

Only the Holy Spirit can take His truth and transform it into personal revelation for you. He is the only One who can move you from unbelief to belief. Therefore, ask the Spirit to renew your mind and transform it to believe His truth.

**c. Choose to WALK in the truth.**

*“I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children **walking in the truth.**” 3 John 4*

Even though you know the truth and believe the truth, you still need to choose to walk in the truth. Truth and belief will do you no good unless you choose to act on them.

Let me share a personal testimony to affirm these three points. When I got married, I wanted to be accepted unconditionally. My expectation was that my wife would not only be unconditionally accepting but that she would accept me in specific ways. When that did not happen, I would get very frustrated and look for ways to reject her.

However, as I grew up in Christ and His truth, I learned that only Christ can truly meet that need of unconditional acceptance according to Romans 15:7 and Philippians 4:19. Once I learned the truth, I began seeking the Holy Spirit to renew my mind to this truth and to bring me to a place where I would begin believing it.

Over time, as the Spirit persuaded me of the truth, I began choosing to walk in that truth. This resulted in my being able to seek and find my acceptance in Christ rather than from my wife.

***Therefore, putting to DEATH your unrealistic expectations will result from LEARNING, BELIEVING, and CHOOSING to walk in the truth.***

### ***Final Truths About Unmet Expectations***

**1. The Holy Spirit will ALWAYS be speaking truth to you when you are tempted to take ownership of your fleshly thoughts and feelings.**

In the very moment that you are tempted to act on your fleshly feelings arising out of your unmet expectations, the Holy Spirit will bring His truth to mind. We see this in the first part of John 16:13:

***“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth....” John 16:13***

The truth is that the Holy Spirit is always communicating with us. The question is, are we listening for His voice? I have never heard an audible voice from the Spirit but He does speak to me primarily by thoughts.

In that moment, when I am tempted to act on my fleshly feelings, I need to stop and listen because the Spirit is giving me the truth that I need in order to be able to combat the flesh.

***Therefore, begin developing the HABIT of listening for the Holy Spirit.***

## **2. There will ALWAYS be a BATTLE with your unmet expectations.**

*“For the **flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh**; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”*  
*Galatians 5:17*

I believe that similar to our lifetime battle with the flesh, battling with our unmet expectations extends throughout our life.

The good news is that not only will your unrealistic expectations decrease as you grow in Christ, but you will increasingly not take ownership of your fleshly thoughts/feelings whether they are triggered by either realistic or unrealistic expectations.

I saw this truth played out with a couple I was working with. The husband wanted his wife to pray with him. Early on when she refused, it would make him angry and he would respond with self-righteous remarks like “God is not going to bless our marriage if we don't pray together;” or “How can we expect to grow spiritually if we don't pray together?” His anger and self-righteousness created real strife over time.

As he began to learn about dying to his expectations, instead of getting angry, he began giving grace to his wife by not continuing to give her a hard time about it and eventually, he stopped bringing the subject up. Rather, he began praying that the Lord would change her heart about praying together. Sometime later, she came to him and was willing to pray with him.

### **3. If you have allowed your fleshly responses to your unmet expectations become STRONGHOLDS then it may take time to be set free.**

If we don't engage God to deal with our fleshly responses concerning our unmet expectations, they can, over time become strongholds. If that happens, depending on the grip that stronghold has on you, it may take time for the Lord to set you free from that stronghold. Let me give you an example to illustrate.

A man I was ministering to shared with me that he lost his fiancée to a drunk driver the night before they were to be married. This began a 15 year journey of his believing that God was not good resulting in his hatred of God. I thought that because of such a painful event that he would never see the goodness of God.

However, as he began learning what it meant to walk in Christ, I noticed that gradually his attitude toward God was changing. It was truly supernatural because he had built a 15 year case for hating God. After we had been together for over a year, he began sharing with me about how much God loves him. This led to his believing that God had a divine purpose in his fiancée dying.

### **Final Thoughts**

Watching God work in this man's heart really brought home to me what Jesus said in Mark 10:27:

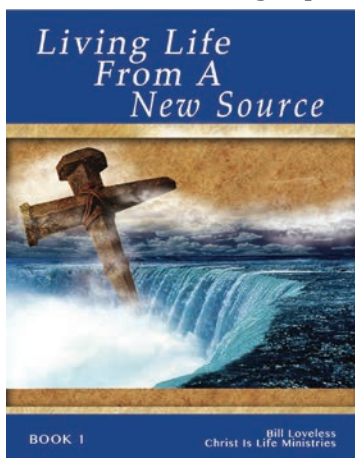
*"Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for **all things are possible with God.** "*

I think this would be a good verse to end this study on. The truth is that we will continue to have realistic and

unrealistic expectations. We will continue to battle the fleshly thoughts and feelings that go along with them. However, the good news is that we have the God of the impossible who will teach us, transform us, and be our freedom and victory over all our unmet expectations. That should give you great hope.

### **Would You Like To Know More?**

Would you like to know more about the subject of this booklet? If so I would encourage you to read our curriculum called, *Living Life From A New Source*. In it, I cover the following topics:



- What is God's part in living THE Christian life?
- What is your part in living THE Christian life?
- How to engage God to be transformed.
- What does a transformed life look like?

Other curriculum we offer that address expectations:

- **Key To A Christ-Centered Marriage**
- **Healing The Wounded Heart**
- **The Battle of The Mind**



These curricula are available on my website ([www.christislifeministries.com](http://www.christislifeministries.com)). Online, you may either download each curriculum for free or purchase a written copy of it which will be mailed to you. There are also video lessons on the website that go with some of the curricula that you can either watch for free or purchase on DVD.

I hope you will take advantage of these studies and seek the Lord for a deeper understanding of His truth.

*Blessings in Christ,*

*Bill Loveless*

P.S., If you have any thoughts concerning what you have read that you would like to share or have any questions about what I have written, please email me at the address below:

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(1-1-17)

# WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

Have you ever thought about how your expectations impact your life, especially when they go unmet? Think about this for a moment. You have expectations about every area of your life: yourself, your relationships, your work, God, and your Christian walk, to name just a few. Things tend to go well when your expectations are being met but what happens when they go unmet?

How do your unmet expectations make you feel? Frustrated? Angry? Out of control? How do your unmet expectations negatively affect your relationships, your feelings about God and your Christian walk? Most importantly, how do you engage God and His truth to deal with or overcome your unmet expectations?

This booklet will attempt to answer these questions through the following topics:

- What are realistic and unrealistic expectations about God, yourself, marriage, circumstances, and your Christian walk.
- How unmet expectations negatively impact you, your relationship with God, your relationships with others and your Christian walk.
- How Satan uses your unmet expectations against you.
- What it looks like to engage God and His truth to overcome your unmet expectations.



Bill Loveless is the director of Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM). CILM is a non-profit, non-denominational ministry that focuses on discipleship. We teach Christians that Christ is our only Source for living the Christian life and what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness.

For further information, see the ministry website at: [www.christislifeministries.com](http://www.christislifeministries.com)

