

What Do You Expect?

(Expectations vs. Truth)



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(Expectations Versus The Truth)

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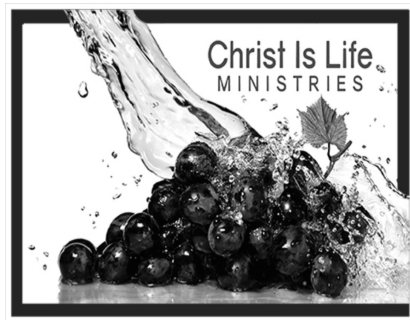
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Introduction

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 when those become unmet expectations, they negatively impacted me and everyone around me. This is my motivation for writing this booklet because as you will discover, much of your struggle in life results from unmet expectations. Therefore, these are the topics we will be looking at in this booklet:

- **Defining** realistic and unrealistic expectations
- **Examples** of expectations concerning God, ourselves, our Christian walk, others, and circumstances
- The **consequences** of unmet expectations
- **God's truth** concerning our expectations.
- **Engaging God by faith** to renew our minds to the truth and set us free from the fleshly behaviors associated with our unmet expectations

The Key To This Study

The key to going through this book is to separate what you know theologically versus what you are really thinking or feeling especially when you are in internal or external conflict, stress, frustrated, or self-focused. It is crucial you engage the Holy Spirit as you go through this booklet because He may expose an unmet expectation you may have that you may be blind to.

The temptation as you go through this study is to think, "I know this already." You may know it but the question is, are you applying it to your life? Therefore, I would not read this booklet with your finite mind but invite the Holy Spirit to read it with you and seek Him to give you new insight and revelation.

CHAPTER ONE

Defining Expectations

Defining Expectations

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

A BELIEF, CERTAINTY, or PRESUMPTION that something will happen and when it doesn’t, it takes you to the FLESH.

Would you agree that our expectations flow from what we believe? 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.

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.

Desire Versus Expectation

As it applies to this study, let’s define “desire.”

DESIRE

To LONG for or HOPE that something will happen but if it doesn’t, you DON’T REACT in the FLESH.

The key part of my definition of desire is that when our desires are not met, we don’t react in the flesh. Let’s look at a biblical example to explain. We know Paul faced a great deal of suffering – beatings, whippings, and stonings just to name a few. His human desire is like yours and mine in that he did not want

to suffer. However, when that desire to not suffer was not met, his response was this:

“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.” Philippians 4:11

Rather than going to the flesh, he stayed in the Spirit and learned to live from Christ’s contentment in spite of all that he suffered.

Now that we have defined both terms, let’s look at the difference between a realistic and an unrealistic expectation.

The Difference Between REALISTIC and UNREALISTIC Expectations

Realistic Expectation

Let’s first define a realistic expectation:

Any expectation that lines up with God’s TRUTH.

For example, look at Romans 12:2.

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

Since being transformed is God’s promise, then we can realistically expect God to keep His promise to transform us.

Unrealistic Expectation

On the other hand, an unrealistic expectation is:

Any expectation that is **CONTRARY** to or **DOES NOT** line up with God’s truth.

For example, if I believe that when I pray for someone's physical healing, I expect them to be healed. When this expectation is not met, I doubt God or get angry at Him for not meeting my expectation.

KEY TRUTH

If a REALISTIC expectation is not met, you can CHOOSE to react in the FLESH in the SAME way as an unmet unrealistic expectation.

For example, let's assume you and your spouse are both Christians. A realistic expectation is that you would pray together. However, if your spouse says they don't want to pray with you, you could react with fleshly frustration or even anger.

Let's look at some examples of fleshly thoughts and feelings that can result from our unmet realistic and unrealistic expectations.

Fleshly Thoughts and Feelings From Our Unmet Expectations

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

Discouraged	Hopeless	Dejected	Wounded
Unloved	Helpless	Troubled	Worthless
Rejected	Miserable	Inadequate	Burdened
Frustrated	Condemned	Resigned	Worried
Critical	Judgmental	Unhappy	Dismayed
Regretful	Angry	Stressed	Inadequate
Displeased	Exploited	Spiteful	Vindictive
Confused	Bewildered	Anxious	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
Empty	Abandoned	Defensive	Self-protective

We will be referring to this list throughout the study.

The truth is that INITIAL thoughts and feelings may NOT be sinful, but if they fester in our minds, they become fleshly and can lead to fleshly behaviors.

We see this in the first part of Ephesians 4:26:

*“Be angry and **do not** sin....”*

I may have initial thoughts of anger that are not sinful but if I stay in those thoughts long enough, they become sinful.

From these fleshly thoughts and feelings, flow fleshly behaviors.

Fleshly Behaviors That Can Result From Unmet Expectations

Frustrated	Angry	Controlling
Rejecting	Unloving	Critical
Guilting	Shaming	Manipulative
Unforgiving	Condescending	Judging
Uncaring	Insensitive	Vindictive
Jealousy	People-pleasing	Self-righteous
Selfish	Abusive	Envious
Deceitful	Bitter	Blaming
Condemning	Resisting	Demanding
Retaliating	Affairs	Prideful
Escape (pornography, alcohol, TV, social media)		

I will be asking you to refer to this list a number of times as you go through the booklet.

Knowledge Versus Belief

Before we continue, let's spend some time looking at the important difference between knowledge and belief.

***"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."* Romans 6:6

*"Now if we have died with Christ, we **believe** that we shall also live with Him."* Romans 6:8

One thing I have noticed as I minister to Christians is that we tend to equate the word "know" with "believe." It is important to know the distinction.

KNOWLEDGE is cognitive understanding of God's truth.

**BELIEF is being SPIRITUALLY CONVINCED of
God's truth by the Holy Spirit.**

For example, a non-Christian can read Romans 6:6 above and have cognitive understanding of God's word. However, since non-Christians do not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, they will never be able to believe God's truth because that only comes as the Holy Spirit reveals it and convinces them it is true.

Therefore, keep in mind that what you know is not as important as what you believe. I share with people that I know too much of the word but my belief has not caught up with my knowledge. Even though knowing the truth is the foundation for transformation, believing the truth is what transforms us.

Satan's Strategy and Our Expectations

As we well know, the three-fold strategy of the enemy is to steal, kill, and destroy your walk with Christ as we see in the second part of John 10:10.

*“The thief comes only to **steal** and **kill** and **destroy**....”*

Here is Satan's strategy when it comes to your expectations.

Satan will use your unmet expectations AGAINST you to keep you DOUBTING God, keep you from BELIEVING God will truly transform you, and keep you in BONDAGE to the fleshly behaviors that result from your unmet expectations.

Here are some examples of how Satan strategizes against us:

- He can insert thoughts that result in unrealistic expectations.
- He can tempt you to stay fixated and even defend your unrealistic expectations.
- He can tempt you to go to your flesh concerning your unmet expectations (i.e., anger, frustration, giving up, etc.).
- He can tempt you to doubt God's character (i.e., His love, His power, and His desire to transform you).
- He can tempt you to doubt God's ability to set you free from your fleshly behaviors.
- He can tempt you to give up on God and go back to self.

Satan works through our flesh because he knows that our flesh is the gateway to defeating us. 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.

He accomplishes this primarily through our thoughts. He can insert lying, condemning, and deceptive thoughts into our minds.

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 – 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.

Note: Satan’s thoughts always come in first person. It will always be “I” not “you.”

The good news is that Satan and his demonic forces have been defeated. However, we have to be vigilant because he is the great deceiver who can subtly manipulate and therefore control us through our thoughts. That is why we must be aware of and speak truth into the thoughts that He wants to insert into our minds. (“Take every thought captive....” 2 Corinthians 10:5)

As you go through this study, seek the Holy Spirit to expose where Satan might be working to tempt you to go to the flesh and keep you in bondage to your fleshly behaviors associated with your unmet expectations.

Let’s begin by looking at expectations we have of God.

CHAPTER TWO

Expectations Concerning God's Character and His Promises

Introduction

When it comes to our expectations concerning God, here are six things that can shape your expectations:

- Your concept of God that was shaped by your parents
- Your biblical understanding about God
- Your definitions of God's character: love, goodness, sovereignty, etc.
- What you believe about God
- Your spiritual growth and maturity
- The depth of your experience and history in walking with God

Concept of God and Your Expectations

Your concept of God not only determines your expectations of God, but it can negatively affect what you believe as well.

For example, I had an angry, controlling, manipulative earthly father who didn't love me, accept me, or value me. Therefore, when I heard the word Father as part of the Trinity, I put my earthly father's face on my heavenly Father's face. Here are some of my unrealistic expectations as a result.

- God was angry with me when I sinned.
- He doesn't really love me, accept me, or value me.
- At some point, He will abandon me all together.

Another example is a lady who was repeatedly sexually abused by her father. Her father made her feel rejected, dirty, and worthless. When it came to her concept of God, she shared

that God would never accept her and because of what happened to her, she believed God saw her as dirty and worthless.

Based on your upbringing, do any of these characteristics depict the early formation of your concept of God?

Unloving	Condemning	Distant
Disinterested	Indifferent	Cold
Rejecting	Judgmental	Not in control
Absent	Not good	Uncaring

With whatever characteristics you chose, how has that impacted, or still impacts, how you feel and what you believe about God?

What You Know Versus What You Believe About God

Two Gods: Theological and Experiential

What I see in most Christians that I have ministered to is that they have two Gods. One God is what I call the “theological” God. By this I mean that our “theological” God is the One we have studied and learned about from the Bible. The other God is the “experiential” God. Our “experiential” God is what we believe and feel about God when we are faced with stress, pressure, and adversity. What we **know** about God is what I call our “theological” God. What we truly **believe** about God is what I call the “experiential” God. Let me illustrate.

Let’s assume that someone is faced with a major health problem. They may “know” intellectually and theologically that God can heal them, but when it comes down to what they “believe” about God, they struggle with fear and anxiety because their experiential God is smaller than their theological God. Therefore, as you go through this chapter, focus on your experiential God when it comes to what you really believe versus what you know theologically about Him.

Expectations Concerning God's CHARACTER

There are several characteristics of God's character. In this section we will focus on three characteristics and some realistic and unrealistic expectations. God is loving, good (gracious, merciful, and compassionate), and sovereign.

We will look at the truth concerning these three expectations and then list some examples of realistic and unrealistic expectations, the truth regarding those expectations, and how to engage God to be set free from them.

God's UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

*"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*

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have read passages like the ones above that confirm God loves you unconditionally. He can't do otherwise because that is His character/essence according to 1 John 4:16. In that same verse, there are two more key words. Know and believe. It is one thing to know that God loves you but the real question is: Do you really believe it?

God's GOODNESS

*"For **the LORD is good** and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5*

*"O taste and see that the **LORD is good.**" Psalm 34:8*

We see from these passages that part of God's character is that He is good. Easton's Bible Dictionary defines God's goodness this way: *"The perfection of God's character which he exercises towards his creatures (i.e., benevolent, merciful, compassionate, long-suffering, patient, giving, forgiving and full of grace)."*

God's SOVEREIGNTY (In Control)

*"... 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. Another definition is God's absolute right to do all things according to His will.

Man's greatest quest, and yet his greatest delusion, is that He is in control or can be in control. It started at the Fall of man and is the driving force in man today. However, we know only God is truly in control and through His sovereignty He will protect, prevent, and cause events to occur.

Realistic Expectations About God's Character

Here are some examples of realistic expectations concerning God's love, goodness, and sovereignty.

- **God's Love** – Nothing I do or not do can prevent God from loving me.
- **God's Goodness** – Being a good God means He will never leave me nor forsake me.

- **God's Sovereignty** – Even when people, events, or the world seem out of control, God will never lose control.

Unrealistic Expectations About God's Character

- **God's Love** – God will love me according to my definition of love (i.e., no pain or suffering).
- **God's Goodness** – God, being good, would not let my young child die.
- **God's Sovereignty** – Since God is sovereign and in control, He will heal me of my cancer.

Fleshly Responses To Unmet Unrealistic Expectations

- **God's Love** – I am so disillusioned because a loving God would not have allowed my pain and suffering.
- **God's Goodness** – It makes me angry that a good God would allow my innocent baby to be born in this condition.
- **God's Sovereignty** – I have to be in control because God doesn't appear to be in control since He let this tragedy happen in my family.

Exercise: What are some of the unmet expectations you might have concerning God's love, goodness (benevolent, merciful, compassionate, and full of grace), and sovereignty; how does it make you feel; what are your fleshly responses when those expectations are not met?

Engaging God To Be Set Free From Unmet Expectations

Using the previous three examples, let's look at God's truth concerning the expectations and steps of faith to engage God to be set free from unrealistic expectations and the fleshly behaviors associated with them.

The Truth: When it comes to God's love, goodness, and sovereignty, we tend to define what those words mean to us. From those definitions we develop expectations. The truth is that finite man cannot fully understand these characteristics but regardless of the unmet expectations, God's character does not change. We live in a fallen world controlled in large part by Satan and surrounded by fallen people in which God allows man to make fleshly/evil decisions.

Our problem is that we want a God who is in control, and yet even though He is in control, He gives man free will to make good and evil choices.

Engaging God: "Lord, persuade me in deeper ways that Your character does not change regardless of how I define Your love, goodness, and sovereignty or what You allow to happen or not happen. Remind me that You allow us free will that can have negative consequences when we make the wrong choices. Since our finite minds cannot comprehend an infinite God, give me the willingness to trust You no matter what does or does not happen. Expose and set me free from my unrealistic expectations and the fleshly behaviors that result."

Question: Will you begin taking steps of faith to be set free from your unmet expectations and fleshly behaviors that result when your expectations about God are not met?

Expectations Concerning God's PROMISES

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

1. 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*

Since every one of us is in bondage to fleshly behavior(s), then this is a wonderful promise from the Lord. We can have the following realistic expectation.

Realistic Expectation: I expect God to set me free because He promises to.

Unrealistic expectation: “God is going to set me completely free from _____. ” “God will meet my timetable for freedom.”

Fleshly Response To The Unmet Expectation: “I am discouraged because I have been trusting God for several weeks and He has not set me free.”

The Truth: You may never be completely set free because: (1) your fleshly behaviors never cease to exist because they are part of the flesh that will be within us until we die; (2) of the depth of the grip a fleshly behavior/stronghold may have on your life. That is not to say that you can't be set free, but our fleshly feelings and behaviors are like the wolf at the door in that, when you are tempted, you might choose to open the door and give in to the fleshly behavior.

Engaging God: “Lord, if my expectation is unrealistic, please reveal that to me. I am frustrated because You have not set me free. I am entrusting that frustration to You and I am asking You to replace my frustration with Your patience and perseverance. I am seeking You to set me free from my unrealistic expectation and give me rest in Your process and Your timetable.

2. 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.

Realistic Expectation: Because it is a promise, we can expect God to keep it.

Unrealistic Expectation: As a result of my deep-seated woundedness from my dad, I engaged God to heal me, with these unrealistic expectations.

- I will be completely healed of my woundedness.
- God will heal me in a timely manner.
- There will be no pain or suffering in the healing process.

Fleshly Response To My Unmet Expectations

As these expectations were not met, I began to get frustrated and have feelings of hopelessness that I would ever be healed.

Truth: The real issue in woundedness is not the wounding events – rather, the false beliefs, fleshly feelings and behaviors that flow from those wounding events. Healing is a lifetime process. Because we live in fallen bodies, complete healing will only come after we enter into our resurrected bodies.

However, the Holy Spirit's healing of me has freed me in ways I never thought possible even though I will continue to be healed. For me, healing did involve pain because I could no longer live in denial. I had to come face to face with my pain associated with those wounding events in order for the healing process to take place.

Engaging God: “Lord, I am trusting in Your timetable for healing. I am entrusting the pain associated with my woundedness to You and seeking You to replace it with Your healing. Set me free from my unrealistic expectations and my frustration and transform me to be “spiritually okay” with Your timing and Your process.”

CHAPTER THREE

Expectations Concerning God's Word and His Will and Ways

Expectations Versus Truth Concerning God's WORD

The way we interpret (or misinterpret) scripture can create unrealistic expectations. Here are some examples.

"The Good"

The first part of Romans 8:28 says:

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for **the good**...."*

When we see the word "good" we can falsely interpret or put our own definition on this word. As a result, we can develop unrealistic expectations like these.

Unrealistic Expectations

"The good" means God will:

- Completely heal me of my health struggle
- Bring my prodigal son or daughter to brokenness and we will be reconciled
- Work things together for what I believe good to mean

Fleshly Responses: If these are your expectations, what is the result when they are not met? Doubt, disillusionment, unbelief, and eventually despair?

The Truth: I believe "the good" falls into three main categories: to grow us up spiritually, to be transformed into Christ-likeness and our true identity, and to draw us into a deeper relationship with God. I am not saying that He might not do some of the

things listed above, but the truth is we live in a fallen world surrounded by fallen people who are under the control of Satan.

Therefore, we can and will experience pain and suffering but God will use it to transform and conform us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). As we build our spiritual history with God, we will have greater Christ-confidence that God will work whatever we are going through for good.

Engaging God: “Holy Spirit, renew my mind to what You mean by “the good” in this situation and set me free from my unrealistic expectations. Persuade me that even though I am struggling with believing it will work together for good, you will give me the willingness to keep trusting You.”

“Work”

*“My children, with whom I am again in **labor** until Christ is formed in you.” Galatians 4:19*

*Therefore, they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may **work the works** of God?” John 6:28*

Let’s look at a realistic and unrealistic expectation we can have depending on how we define “work.”

Unrealistic Expectation: If you live from a performance mindset, you define “work” as using your intellect, will power, and ability to accomplish whatever work you think God is calling you to do.

Realistic Expectation: If you know Christ as life, you believe “work” is not working for God but depending on God to do His work through you.

The Truth: The word makes it very clear the Christian life is “work” and there are “works” to be accomplished. We can shy away from the word “work” and substitute “abiding” but it is still work. However, Paul makes it clear there is labor involved.

What is the labor and what must we do to do the works of God? Part of the answer can be found in Colossians 1:29 and John 6:29.

“That’s why I **work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.**”

*Jesus answered and said to them, “This is **the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.**”*

The work for the Christian is dependence/faith according to these verses. It seems to be a paradox, but dependence takes work since dependence is not our default mindset. I define “work” in this context as a spiritual willingness and determination to live in an abiding relationship with Christ.

Expectations Concerning God’s Will and Ways

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may **prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**” Romans 12:2

God’s WILL

Theologians have described different types of God’s will. Here are a few descriptions:

Perfect or Preferred Will of God – God’s perfect plan for your life which is good for you and pleasing to Him.

Prescribed Will of God – found in the word of God that should determine our thoughts, beliefs, and behavior.

Permissive Will of God – God lets man choose his thoughts and make his own choices but it may not line up with His perfect will.

Sovereign Will of God – all of God’s plans and purposes will be accomplished.

We don't have space to go through these types of wills but for the sake of this study, I believe we can all agree with Paul that as Christians we want to choose to live out of God's perfect and preferred will for our lives. The reason being is that it is "good, acceptable, and perfect." The problem comes when we put expectations on God's will.

Unrealistic Expectations

- It can't be God's will for me to lose my job.
- It can't be God's will for my child to die.
- It is not God's will for _____ to happen to me.

Fleshly Responses – if our will or understanding of God's will doesn't line up with His, we can choose to be frustrated and angry, and eventually give up on God. Or we can go into self-condemnation for not figuring out or doing God's will when we know what it is.

God's WAYS

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. ISAIAH 55:8

I believe we could all say "Amen" to this verse. I find myself being perplexed and confused about what God is doing or not doing, how He is doing it, and why He is doing or not doing something. We see this in the Bible in several places. Let's look at two instances involving Jesus.

Think about these events in Jesus' life. When He came to the pool of Bethesda and saw all these people suffering, wouldn't a realistic expectation be that the Holy Spirit through Him would heal them all? But He only healed one. Why? How about when Jesus heard that Lazarus was near death in John 11. Look at these three verses for a moment.

3 *“So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’* 5 Now **Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.** 6 *So when He heard that he was sick, He then **stayed two days longer** in the place where He was.”*

John 11:3, 5-6

It says Jesus loved Martha and Mary. They sent word and said, “The one whom You love is sick.” It was clear that Lazarus was dearly loved by Jesus. Since this is the case, why didn’t Jesus immediately go and heal Lazarus? Because it was God’s will for Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead so that the Holy Spirit would draw people to Himself as the Savior. When it comes to God’s ways, we tend to ask the “why” question which reveals our unrealistic expectations.

Unrealistic Expectations

Here are some examples of unrealistic expectations we might have about God’s will or His ways.

- Why won’t God simply make His will clear to me?
- I don’t understand why You are not doing what I prayed for because Your word says _____.
- I thought You wanted me to _____. Why did You not let that happen?

Fleshly Responses: What might be some fleshly responses when these “why” questions are not answered?

The Truth Concerning God’s Will and Ways

We are the creatures, and He is the Creator. We have finite minds trying to figure out an infinite God’s will and ways. Our part, when we cannot determine His will or realize that His will and ways might include pain and suffering, is to continue to trust that He is good and that His will, purpose, and plans for our lives will be for our good. Trying to reconcile God’s sovereign will, permissive will, perfect will, etc., is impossible. This is where our concept of God is so crucial. Even though He allows or causes

events that don't line up with our desires or understanding of His will, we must come back to the truth that He is loving and good and He is for us.

"If (Since) God is for us, who is against us." Romans 8:31

Engaging God: "Lord, I am frustrated because I thought _____ was Your will for my life but it is creating stress, pain, and suffering. I am confused because this way does not seem to be good but if it is, persuade me that even though it involves pain and suffering, it does not change the truth that You are a good God and Your will is for 'the good.'"

"Nevertheless"

*"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: **nevertheless** not My will but Your will be done."*

Matthew 26:42

When it comes to this verse, I am so thankful Jesus came to the place of "nevertheless." Aren't you? If not, where would you and I be today. However, when it comes to you and me, we tend to struggle with this word because sometimes we want God's will to conform to ours. However, whether it is a physical healing that you are praying for, a future spouse you hope the Lord will bring into your life, or your married adult child with young children who is having an affair, God is continually bringing us to the place of "nevertheless."

"BUT GOD"

*"we are afflicted in every way, **BUT** not crushed; perplexed, **BUT** not despairing; persecuted, **BUT** not forsaken; struck down, **BUT** not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

Whenever we get into conflict or some adversity, in our humanity, we tend to cry out for relief from the situation. We want the conflict to subside because no one wants to feel the

pain that arises out of these circumstances. However, where the Lord is bringing us in the midst of our perplexity, pain, suffering, etc., is to the place of “but God.” What does “but God” mean?

“It is the place where NO MATTER what is going on in our lives that creates stress, pain, or suffering, we CONTINUE TRUSTING God.

To better understand this point, let’s look at David’s “but God” experience in Psalm 13. The first four verses describe the pain going on in David’s soul.

*¹“O LORD, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way? ²How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand? ⁵**BUT** I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;⁶ My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.⁷ I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.”*

Even though David is in this terrible situation and the pain is very real, what he says is “but (God.)” Why? Verse 5 tells us that many times David has experienced the lovingkindness of God. In verse 6, David is telling us that he rejoices in the salvation of the Lord because He has delivered David many times from adversity. In other words, David has a history with God’s deliverance of him. Therefore, know that part of spiritual maturity is the Holy Spirit bringing us to the place of “BUT GOD.”

“Well, Amen”

Mike Wells, who was the director of Abiding Life Ministries until he passed away, had a favorite saying when God was not meeting his expectations concerning God’s will and plans. The expression was, “Well, amen.” He explained that this was not an expression of resignation. Rather, it was his way of saying, “If this is God’s will then I am trusting that His will and plan is better than mine.” I have adopted these two words as I have grown in my faith. I pray you will as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

Expectations Concerning Yourself and Your Christian Walk

"For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. ²¹ For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better." Philippians 1:20-21

In this chapter, we will talk about expectations we can put on ourselves or God concerning our Christian walk. To lay the foundation for this chapter, let me share some key truths about living THE Christian life.

Key Truths About Our Christian Walk

- The Christian life is not a set of legalistic rules to follow. Rather, the Christian life is Christ Himself. – John 14:6
- Christ, not us, is the Source for living THE Christian life. – 1 Corinthians 1:30 (ASV)
- God is not going to help us live the Christian life. He Himself is the supplier, producer, and transformer concerning our Christian walk. – Philippians 1:6
- We can't live THE Christian life apart from Christ living it in and through us. – Galatians 2:20
- Our part is to depend on God to make His promises (victory, freedom, healing, and transformation) an experiential reality in our lives. – John 15:5
- We are to spiritually grow up by growing into Christ-likeness. – Ephesians 4:15 (NLT)

I am presuming that you are at least aware, if not walking in these truths. However, if these are new truths to you, I recommend you read a booklet called *"A" Life? Or "THE" Life?* You can find it on our website (www.christislifeministries.com) under the Discipleship Booklets tab.

Unrealistic Expectations Concerning Living From Christ As THE Life

Here are some unrealistic expectations I often hear about living THE Life.

As a result of living “THE” Life, I expect:

- I will feel or experience God working in my life, as I take steps of faith, depending on Him.
- God will transform me sooner than later.
- There will be less resistance from my flesh and Satan since I am now living from Christ as my Source.

The Fleshly Responses To Unmet Realistic Expectations

Let’s look at the fleshly responses to these unmet expectations.

- I am discouraged because I am not feeling God working to transform my life. Is He really working?
- I am perplexed because I have been walking by faith for some time and I am not experiencing any change. I don’t believe God is really going to transform me.
- I am frustrated because I am experiencing more resistance than when I was trying to live the Christian life in my own strength. Why is that? After all, I am living dependent on God versus me being the Source. Shouldn’t there be less resistance?

These unmet expectations can lead to unbelief and disillusionment, and eventually lead us to giving up on our walk of faith because it is not meeting our expectations.

The Truth: Let’s look at the truth concerning the above expectations.

- Early on in our walk of faith, we may not feel or experience God working or not feel or experience the

effects of His transforming work. That is why it is called a walk of faith, not feeling and experience.

- As we seek to live in dependence on God, we all tend to get a little impatient at God's timetable. We want to experience change sooner than later. However, this is where God's objective and ours may differ. The truth is that God will transform us in His timing. However, more importantly for Him, He wants us to learn how to walk by faith and is growing our faith in the process.
- We will face more resistance from our flesh and Satan/demons when we start living from Christ as our Source. The reason being that Satan knows the truth about living THE Christian life. He knows that you will be transformed by living from Christ. Therefore, his objective is to do everything he can to prevent you from walking dependent on Christ. We will discuss some of the other resistance we face later in this chapter.

Steps of faith: "Even though transformation is going slower than I expected, I will trust Your perfect timing and will walk in Your patience. Even though I am not feeling or experiencing changes, I am trusting by faith that You are transforming me. Persuade me that transformation will involve more resistance because of Satan's strategies to destroy my walk of faith."

Expectations and Transformation Into Christ-Likeness

*"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being **transformed** into **His (Christ) likeness**...."*

2 Corinthians 3:18

Being transformed into Christ-likeness is one of the greatest promises in the Bible. What is Christ-likeness?

Christ-likeness is living FROM and EXPERIENCING the SUPERNATURAL characteristics of Christ.

Here is a partial list of ~~Christ-life~~ **Christ-like** characteristics:

Unconditional Love	Victory	Worth
Acceptance	Freedom	Patience
Strength	Peace	Forgiveness
Understanding	Security	Kindness
Wisdom	Discernment	Compassion
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Humility
Boldness	Power	Rest
Righteousness	Courage	Hope
Gentleness	Joy	Christ-control
Faithfulness	Goodness	Selflessness

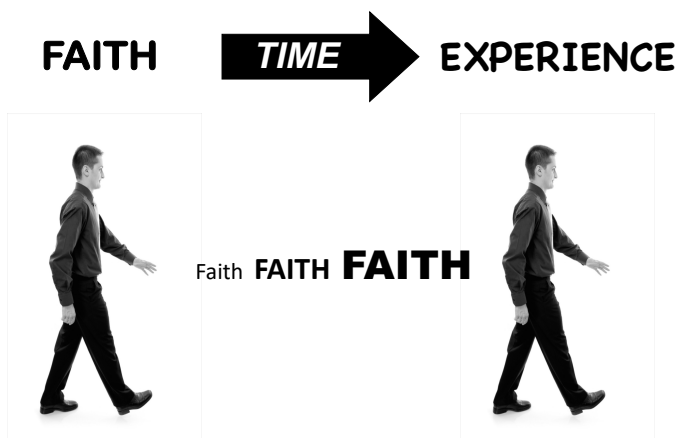
Expectations and The Transformation Process

Realistic Expectation: 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.

Unrealistic Expectations: Here are some examples I hear most often.

- God is going to transform me sooner than later.
- I want to know how God (God's process) is going to change me.
- I don't want there to be any pain or suffering in this process.

Truth: 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 at different points along the path of transformation. What we need to understand is that God wants us to be transformed, but more importantly, He wants us to learn how to walk by faith and grow our faith in that process. As the diagram illustrates, as we walk by faith, over time, we will experience transformation. However, during the process our faith will grow.



God Is Growing Our FAITH In The Process

Engaging God: Faith says, “Lord, I am okay with Your timetable. I don’t need to know how You are transforming me and I can rest in the truth that You are transforming me whether I feel it or not. In spite of any pain I might encounter, I will entrust that to You knowing that You are using that pain as part of the transformation process.”

Transforming Fleshly Behaviors Into Christ-Like Behaviors

As we grow spiritually, the Holy Spirit will transform you to live from Christ’s love, joy, humility, selflessness, etc. In addition, the Spirit will set us free from our fleshly behaviors and transform us to live from Christ-likeness.

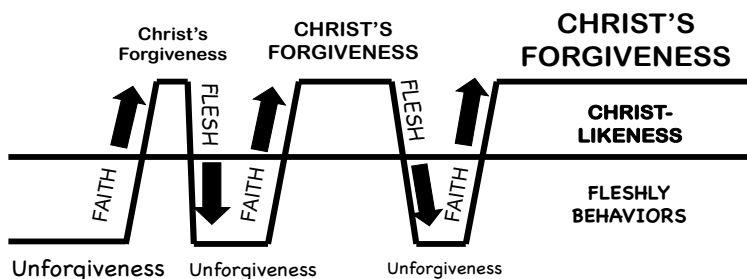
For example, as illustrated in the diagram on the following page, the Holy Spirit will set us free from our unforgiveness and transform us to live from Christ-like forgiveness.

Key Truth: What we don’t understand is how long God’s process will take. Our part is to keep taking steps of faith, believing that God will eventually replace our fleshly behaviors with Christ-likeness.

Unforgiveness **TIME** → Christ-like Forgiveness



Another illustration I often use to illustrate the transformation process is the “line” analogy.



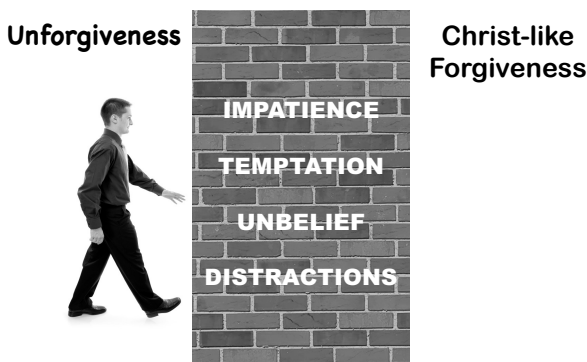
Let's assume you can't forgive someone. Below the line you are living from fleshly unforgiveness. What does engaging God look like:

Engaging God: “Lord, I can’t forgive _____ for what they did to me. Persuade me that I contain all of Your forgiveness and have no excuse for not forgiving _____. I am trusting You to set me free from my unforgiveness and to replace my fleshly unforgiveness with Your forgiveness so that I can live above the line.”

As you begin taking steps of faith, God will renew your mind and transform you to live above the line from Christ-like forgiveness for that person. Over time the Holy Spirit will transform you by replacing your unforgiveness to forgiving your offender.

Walls of Resistance and Unrealistic Expectations

We take steps of faith and go above the line, but we meet walls of resistance and the pull of our flesh takes us back below the line. The diagram on the following page illustrates this. Here are some examples of those walls, the unrealistic expectations, the fleshly responses, and the truth concerning those expectations as the Spirit moves us from unforgiveness to Christ-like forgiveness.



IMPATIENCE – When we have walked by faith for some time and we don't feel God is meeting our timetable expectation to experience forgiveness, we get impatient. This is a common obstacle because of our need for God to work faster in our lives.

The Truth: When we hit the wall of impatience, in that moment, draw on Christ's patience and seek the power of the Spirit to push past the impatience to continue walking by faith.

TEMPTATION – We will be constantly tempted by Satan through our flesh to turn back to self as the source. If we give into the temptation, we might become frustrated, and quit

walking by faith, which will, in this case, result in being stuck in bondage to our unforgiveness.

The Truth: We have God's power in us that can resist every temptation we face, if we choose to engage it.

UNBELIEF – Unbelief is a major roadblock because it prevents us from not only believing God and His promises, but it prevents us from trusting Him as well. In this example, we can be walking by faith but the fleshly pull of our unforgiveness is stronger than our faith with the result we don't believe He can really set us free. This unbelief creates doubt, distrust, and an unwillingness to keep walking by faith.

The Truth: With every step of faith we take, the Holy Spirit is transforming us by replacing our unbelief with the truth and replacing our unforgiveness with His forgiveness.

DISTRACTIONS – This is the most common obstacle because life is full of distractions – distractions such as people, jobs, circumstances, and the endless to-do lists. Satan will use these legitimate distractions to keep us below the line.

Truth: To keep distractions from derailing our walk of faith, we must seek the Holy Spirit to refocus our attention on Him and depend on His power to keep walking by faith.

As we continue to engage God's power to move back above the line by faith, our faith grows stronger and we stay above the line longer. At some point, God will replace your unforgiveness with His forgiveness.

Unrealistic Expectations Concerning Our Walk of Faith

During this faith-walk process, we can develop unrealistic expectations. When you fall back below the line, you might have some unrealistic expectations like these:

- My flesh is so strong, I will never be able to forgive this person.
- Why can't I just stay above the line all the time?
- I have to condemn myself because I can't stay above the line.

Fleshly Responses: We can become impatient, frustrated, and even angry, and eventually give up all together.

The Truth:

1. Our flesh is very strong but we have the power of the Spirit that will ALWAYS overcome our flesh if we choose to walk dependent on Him.
2. We are all at times going to fail and give into our flesh and fall below the line. When we do, we repent of our flesh and take another step of faith.
3. The enemy will use self-condemnation to keep us below the line and give up. However, we know that Romans 8:1 tells us that we are free from self-condemnation.

Engaging God: "Lord, I am tempted to give into my flesh but I am trusting in Your power to resist that temptation. I gave into my flesh but remind (persuade) me that I don't have to wallow in self-condemnation because there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus."

Expectations We Think God Puts On Us

When you think of some of the expectations you think God has for you, what would those be? Here are some examples to stimulate your thinking.

- God expects me to read my Bible and have a quiet time every day.
- God expects me to consistently live out His truth and stay above the line. (Refer to the line diagram on page 31.)
- God expects me to grow up spiritually, live life for others, and grow into a deeper relationship with Him.

While all these may seem like realistic expectations, the truth is **God has no expectations of you at all**. Rather, **He only has desires**. His main desire is this:

That you live in total DEPENDENCE on Him.

If you live out of this one desire God has of you, then it will set you free from any expectations you believe He has for you. In light of this truth, let's substitute expectations with desires.

- God desires that I spend time with Him and spend time in His word every day.
- God desires that I live out His truth and stay above the line.
- God desires that I grow up spiritually, live life for others, and grow into a deeper relationship with Him.

Let's end with this key truth.

Even though we may put unrealistic expectations on OURSELVES and our walk with God, God has no expectations of you, ONLY DESIRES.

CHAPTER FIVE

Expectations Concerning Your Marriage

Introduction

As I have disciplined 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. Let's first look at unrealistic expectations.

Unrealistic Expectations and Our God-Given Needs

Here are some of the unrealistic expectations that I hear most often:

My spouse:

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

We can also put expectations on our expectations. Here a few examples:

- For my spouse to make me happy, I expect him/her to do things my way.
- For me to be loved, I expect my spouse to have sexual intimacy whenever I desire.
- For me to feel accepted, my spouse needs to affirm me often and not reject me.
- For me to feel respected, I expect him/her to defer to my judgment.

Let's make this more personal. Take a few moments and complete the exercise below.

Exercise: Please complete the following sentences:

I feel loved when he/she _____

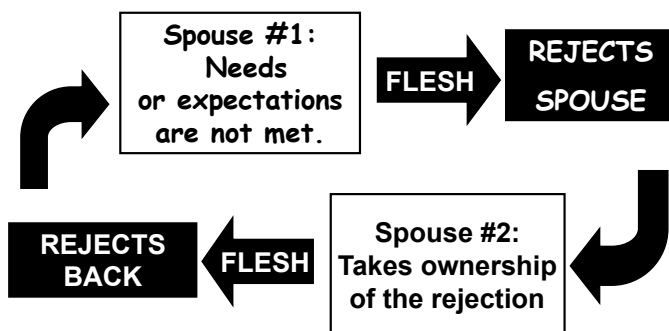
I feel respected when he/she _____

I feel valued by my spouse when my spouse _____

Where Do These Unmet Needs Lead Us?

Early on in my marriage, I did not know then the truths I am sharing with you now with the result, I expected my wife to constantly be valuing me by affirming me because of how inadequate I felt all the time. When she didn't meet that expectation, I would feel rejected and would look for fleshly ways to manipulate her to affirm me or look for ways to reject her. We ended up in what I call the "rejection cycle." Look at the following diagram to illustrate.

The Rejection Cycle



Does this look familiar to you? If so, look at the results.

Unmet Expectations Result In Fleshly Rights

In addition to the rejection cycle that results from unmet expectations, another result is what I call fleshly “rights.” Let me define fleshly “rights.”

In marriage, fleshly “rights” are SELF-CENTERED, sinful DEMANDS toward your spouse that are produced by your FLESH.

Here are some examples.

Because I expect that:

- You will respect me in the ways I want you to.
- I will be in control.
- I will be charge of disciplining the kids.
- I will be the final decision maker.

I have the following rights:

- I have the “right” to be respected.
- I have the “right” to be in control.
- I have the “right” to be in charge of disciplining the kids.
- I have the “right” to do it my way.

Fleshly Behaviors That Result From Unmet Unrealistic Expectations

What are some fleshly behaviors/rights you are experiencing in your marriage as a result of your expectations not being met from page 7?

If you are not set free from your unmet expectations and the fleshly behaviors associated with them, it can lead to ongoing, unresolved conflict, emotional separation, physical separation, affairs, or divorce.

Engaging God With The Truth To Be Set Free From Your Unrealistic Expectations In Marriage

Freedom Concerning Unmet Needs

The Truth: There are physical and emotional needs that can be met by each spouse. However, the God-given needs we are talking about such as unconditional love, unconditional acceptance, value/worth, respect, and security can only be met in Christ according to Philippians 4:19.

*“And my **God will supply all your needs** according to His riches in glory **in Christ Jesus.**”*

Refer back to the list of Christ-like characteristics on page 29. The truth is that only Christ can truly meet these needs. Therefore, seek to get these five needs met in Christ because your spouse will never be able to meet them. Let’s look at some examples of engaging God to meet those needs.

Engaging God: “My spouse is not meeting my need/expectation for unconditional love. Renew my mind to the truth that need can only be met in You and set me free from this unrealistic expectation.”

Engaging God: “My spouse won’t accept me and affirm me in the ways I expect, leaving me feeling rejected. Renew my mind to the truth that my acceptance comes from You and set me free from my rejection and my fleshly desire to reject back.”

Key Truth: We allow spouses to reject us when we take ownership of their rejection. Would we be rejected if we walked in Christ’s acceptance and did not take ownership of our spouse’s rejection? The answer is “no” because in Christ you are unrejectable.

When you find your needs being met in Christ rather than trying to get them met from your spouse, this will move you and your spouse from being “takers” to “givers.”

Freedom From Unrealistic Expectations Concerning Fleshly Rights

The TRUTH Concerning Fleshly “Rights” In Marriage

What is the truth about your fleshly “rights?” The truth is that we, as spouses, have no fleshly rights according to Galatians 5:24.

*“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.”*

Paul is telling us since our flesh is already crucified, we are free from our flesh and our fleshly rights. If you are dead to your flesh, how many fleshly “rights” do you have? You have NO fleshly rights. Therefore, when you feel you have fleshly rights, engage God to renew your mind to the truth and set you free from them.

Example: Let’s assume you feel you have the fleshly right to be the only one to discipline your kids.

Step of faith: “Lord, renew my mind to the truth that since I have been crucified to the flesh, I have no fleshly rights. Set me free from this fleshly right and keep reminding me that my spouse and I are to work together in disciplining our kids.”

Realistic Expectations and Marriage

If both spouses are Christians, we can have realistic expectations. Here are some examples.

- We will seek Christ as our Source for living life.
- We will go to church together.
- We will pray together.
- We will share our deepest struggles with one another.

What Can Happen When Realistic Expectations Are NOT Met?

Since all the expectations in the example above are realistic, selfless, and Christ-centered, we can expect them to be met. However, when our spouse does not meet our realistic expectations, we can exhibit the same fleshly behaviors as when our unrealistic expectations are not met. Let's look at an example and how to engage God to set us free from our fleshly behavior.

Example: "I expect my spouse to pray with me. When he/she doesn't want to, I get frustrated and self-righteously say, 'God won't be pleased with us if we don't pray together.'"

Engaging God: "My expectation since we are both Christians is that we will pray together. He/she does not want to. Therefore, give me a willingness to give him/her grace and set me free from this expectation. Give me the desire to pray that You will give him/her the willingness to pray with me."

What are some of your realistic expectations you have about your spouse that are not being met? What are your fleshly responses to those unmet expectations? Will you seek God to be set free?

CHAPTER SIX

Expectations Concerning OTHERS

With all our relationships come expectations. Let's look at some of our expectations of our kids and our other relationships.

Expectations Concerning Your Kids

Unrealistic Expectations

We all have expectations about our kids. Many of those came from the expectations our parents had regarding us. Here are some examples of unrealistic expectations:

- I expect my kids to be saved before they leave home.
- I expect my kids to love me no matter what.
- I expect them to only be around other Christian friends.

The Truth: We may think that our expectations are realistic when in fact they are not. Seek the Holy Spirit to reveal to you whether or not they are and seek Him to set you free.

Engaging God: "I have an expectation of my kids only being around other Christian kids. Reveal to me if this is a realistic or unrealistic expectation. If it is unrealistic, I am seeking You to set me free from it."

Realistic Expectations

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

These are realistic in that this is what the Lord desires for all of us because they line up with God's truth. However, if your kids are grown and none of these expectations have been met, one

fleshly 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.

The Truth: God created your children with free will. Regardless of how well you love them and nurtured them spiritually, they must eventually make their own decisions.

If you feel you could have done better or more to love your kids or nurture them, you don't have to live in regret and self-condemnation. Rather, entrust your kids to God, continue to love them with the love of Christ, pray for them, and trust God to transform their hearts in the same way He has transformed yours.

Engaging God For Your Adult Children: "Lord, I feel regrets and condemn myself for not doing a better job as a parent. Persuade me that Your love and grace is at work in my kids regardless of how well, or not, I parented. Remind me that my part now is to love them with the love of Christ and pray for their walk with You."

Engaging God For Children Still At Home: "Holy Spirit, please expose my unrealistic expectations concerning my children and set me free from them. Be my wisdom and discernment in how You want to raise my kids through me. Be my patience and unconditional love when they don't meet my expectations."

Expectations and Christian Friendships

Other Christian relationships are crucial to us for many reasons. For encouragement, exhortation, compassion, and speaking the truth in love to name a few. This is especially true for close relationships. When I look at my very close personal relationships, here are some characteristics they exhibit:

- Good listener
- Trustworthy
- Not critical or judgmental
- Caring and compassionate
- Feeling safe and secure with them
- Experiencing the love of Christ through them

Because of these close friendships, I have expectations that:

- They will never betray my trust.
- They will love me in spite of my fleshly behaviors.
- They will always be there in times of struggle.
- I can trust them with my deepest struggles.

I know they have the same expectations of me. These all seem like realistic expectations, but what is the truth?

***Our friends are HUMAN and FALLEN like we are
and will FAIL us at some point. We too
being human will fail THEM.***

When they do fail us, we can react in the flesh or give grace and forgive. I had a friend who I thought was “totally” trustworthy until he betrayed my trust one day. I never thought he would do that but when he did, my initial response was anger. I expected him to be trustworthy but in this case he was not. In the past, I would have held on to that anger and written him off.

I must admit that I wrestled with my anger for awhile, but the Lord persuaded me by reminding me that I am human just like he is and must give him grace and forgive him. After the Lord softened my heart, I went to him and speaking the truth in love I shared with him my offense. I told him I forgave him and he repented. We are good friends until this day.

The Truth: Our friends will let us down and when they do, we can choose to take offense, hold onto our unforgiveness, anger,

etc., or seek the Holy Spirit to give us a heart of grace, forgiveness, and love. This is how I engaged God with my friend.

Engaging God: “Lord, I repent of my unforgiveness towards my friend. Give me a heart of forgiveness for him. Continually remind me that we are both human and I will most likely let him down one day by not meeting his expectations. Persuade me that in Your humility I need to go to him and forgive him.”

Expectations Concerning Fellow Christians’ Beliefs and Behavior

When it comes to those we go to church with or other Christians in our lives, we have realistic and unrealistic expectations about them.

BELIEFS

“Hidden” Expectations

I go to a church where folks come from many different denominations and varying beliefs. We all hold to the belief concerning salvation by grace. However, as I have taught many of them, I have discovered they have many different beliefs about sanctification, spiritual gifts, etc. This is true for all of us on some level because of our spiritual background.

One of our “hidden” expectations is that others will or should believe like we do. After all, what you believe is the truth (to you). When they don’t, how are we to navigate, in Christ, through these differing beliefs?

Pharisee? or Grace Giver?

Let me answer this question by sharing a story. In my “religious” past, I learned the Bible in the original Greek which made me an “expert” on the Bible. I defined an “expert” as a condescending, self-righteous Pharisee. (Even though I didn’t realize it at the time.) If you disagreed with me, I would fight you spiritually until and I beat you down until you agreed with me

or you “canceled” me. Ever struggle with this as well to some degree?

When I discovered Life in Christ, God began transforming me from a Pharisee to a “grace giver.” Let me give you a personal example. There was a guy who felt he had the spiritual gift of “correction.” I know that gift because I had it for years. He sat down with me and was going page by page through one of my books. On every page, he was correcting my “false” doctrine about Life in Christ and telling me his version of the truth. As he was doing this, I thought of the “Pharisaical Bill” who did the same thing but much worse. I found myself having pity and compassion for this man because I knew where he was coming from.

As I sat there, I asked the Holy Spirit how I should respond. He put these thoughts into my mind which I shared. “I appreciate your thoughts but I need to tell you one thing in light of what you shared. The truths in this book have brought me, my marriage, and many others I have ministered to from death to life. I and their lives have been radically transformed. Therefore, you can contradict my theology but you can’t contradict my testimony.” All said in a loving, not a defensive tone. He was looking for a fight but through the Spirit I was able to love – not fight.

The Truth: When we disagree with others or others disagree with us concerning our beliefs, what are some key truths we need to understand?

- We all have a judgmental and Pharisaical flesh. We can choose to act on our flesh when someone disagrees with us or choose to live from the Spirit.
- No one has the corner on the truth. We are all still in process of learning. (I have taught some things in the past I thought were true but came to discover I was wrong, or they at least needed further correction.)
- When we disagree, respond in love and humility not pride/defensiveness.
- Agree to disagree in love.

Examples of Giving Grace Concerning These Expectations

- “Thank you for sharing your beliefs. We are all still very much in process so I will explore the word of God further with the Holy Spirit concerning what you shared.”
- “I appreciate your thoughts on this Biblical truth. Even though we disagree, I will continue to seek the Holy Spirit to renew my mind to the truth or affirm that what I believe is the truth.”
- (Speaking in love) – “I am afraid that we are going to have to agree to disagree. However, I don’t want our disagreement to adversely affect our relationship.”

BEHAVIOR

Unrealistic Expectations

Based on what we believe, we can put expectations on other Christians’ behavior. Some of the lines I hear quite often are, “Since they are Christians, they should know better.” “A real Christian wouldn’t behave like that.” Here are some unrealistic expectations we put on fellow Christians.

- They should always behave according to God’s truth.
- They should be like I am in resisting the temptation to _____.
- Judging by their fruit, I don’t even believe they are Christians.
- I have the right to judge, correct, and hold them accountable because of their fleshly behavior.

Fleshly Behaviors Resulting From Our Expectations: self-righteous, arrogant, condescending, and feeling superior.

The Truth: None of us behaves totally according to God’s truth because we are all subject to the power of the flesh. We are not

to compare our spiritual journey with others. God did not call us to be fruit inspectors. He calls us to be lovers.

Examples of Giving Grace

- “It would be easy for me to judge my Christian friend for having an affair, but I need to see the log in my own eye first according to Matthew 7:4.”
- “I may be stronger in some areas than other Christians, but I need to understand that I fail in some areas and that they may not be as far along in their spiritual growth as I am.”
- “God has not called me to be a fruit inspector. I will give them grace instead of judging or comparing them.”

Expectations Concerning Non-Christians

You may watch something on the news about some inhumane things someone did to another person or persons. Or it may be some politician that stands for some viewpoint that is unbiblical. Things like these can move us to frustration and even anger. Behind the curtain of our frustration or anger is an expectation that man could not or should not think or do such horrible things.

We think this because we (consciously or unconsciously) expect people to conform to our moral and Christian norms and standards. When they don't, it can produce fleshly rights to be angry, judgmental, and condemning. However, what is the truth?

The Truth: People who are not Christians are subject to all the evil, to Satan, and to all this world has to offer. Without the Spirit's control, man is capable of anything. Therefore, we can be free from our expectations of non-Christians because they are under the influence of Satan, totally governed by their moral compass or lack of it, and have no other choice but to live from their flesh.

I liken non-Christians to a dummy and a ventriloquist. The non-Christian is the dummy and Satan is the ventriloquist. They are totally at his mercy and control. This should give us a heart of giving grace and loving them in spite of their fleshly behaviors – “forgive them because they don’t know what they are doing” as it says in Luke 23:34.

Others’ Expectations of You

When other Christians or non-Christians have unrealistic or realistic expectations about us, we can either respond in the Spirit or the flesh.

Unrealistic Expectation – this person expects me to be a part of what he/she is doing, but I know it is of the flesh.

Realistic Expectation: This person expects me to be excited and passionate about my Christian life, but I am not there yet.

Fleshly Responses

We can go to self-condemnation for not meeting their expectations: “I will try harder to meet their expectations” or we can succumb to pride: “I know I am right (maybe you are but maybe you are not) so I don’t have to give into their expectations of me.”

The Truth: When it comes to expectations from others, our part is to seek the Spirit to reveal to us through His word or directly, whether or not an expectation is realistic or unrealistic. If it is not realistic, then we can express in love to that person that we won’t be able to meet his/her expectation because it does not line up with God’s truth. Using the realistic expectation above, we don’t have to feel condemned. Rather, we can seek that fellow Christian to pray that we will reach that place of excitement and passion.

FINAL NOTE

Spiritual Growth and Expectations

*“As a result, we are no longer to be **children**, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”*

Ephesians 4:14

We Will Have Fewer Expectations As A Result of Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth is essential in being set free from our unmet unrealistic and realistic expectations and the fleshly behaviors that flow from them. As we grow, we can expect the following:

We will be set FREE from our unrealistic expectations and our fleshly behaviors which will result in FEWER and FEWER expectations.

We Will Become A Healthy Member of The Body of Christ

In addition, we will fulfill and live out the truth of Ephesians 4:16:

“As each part **does its own special work**, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

As we grow and are set free from our unrealistic expectations and fleshly behaviors, we will fulfill our calling to become a healthy and vital member of the body of Christ. We will share with and encourage other Christians with the truth in order for them to grow and be free from their expectations. The end result will be a healthy body of Christ that is full of and expresses the

love of Christ because love is the ultimate goal of the body of Christ.

Conclusion

I pray that during this study, the Holy Spirit has revealed or exposed some of your unmet expectations and that you are now on the path of engaging God to set you free from the fleshly behaviors associated with these expectations and replace them with Christ-likeness. As we are set free and are being transformed, it will free us to grow in our love for others. And isn't this what we are called to do?

Where Do I Go From Here?

We have several booklets, curriculums, and videos available to download for free or purchase from our ministry website (www.christislifeministries.com). I hope you will take advantage of them.

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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