

Preparation for Marriage Manual

Part 4 – What do you expect from Marriage?

Every person who marries enters the marriage relationship with certain expectations.

These expectations come from many sources such as parents, personal and family values, society in which we live, books, speakers and our own ideas.

It is very important to find out what these expectations are for yourself and your future partner.

Consider which can be achieved, which are realistic, and how to handle them when things do not go according to plan.

Expectation carries with it the attitude of hope.

Hope has been defined as “*the anticipation of something good*”. Hope is necessary in a marriage relationship as it motivates us and often keeps us going in difficult times.

This next exercise will take some thought and time on your part.

Write twenty expectations you will have of your partner when you’re married.

These can be simple or elaborate.

For example, a husband may expect his wife to:-

Always be at home and never go out to work

To have sex with him whenever he wants it

For example, a wife may expect her husband:-

To go to her parents’ house with her whenever she goes

To be the spiritual leader in their home

To spend the weekend at home, not “*out with the boys*”

List these expectations now, but do **not** discuss them with your future partner as yet.

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Now list ten expectations you think your future partner will have of you in marriage.

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Now share this with your partner.

2 Another expectation couples have is fidelity

They expect that they will be faithful to each other. After all, infidelity as commonly conceived would be out of the question in a Christian marriage.

Fidelity, however, concerns not only sexual faithfulness, but other areas of faithfulness as well.

Unfaithful to their mate through their work being the centre of their attention instead of their partner.

Some are unfaithful to their partners through their mothers, golf, cars, church work, housekeeping, children, etc.

Putting any person, possession, or activity [with the exception of your relationship with Jesus Christ] before your partner could make you unfaithful to your marriage relationship.

What is needed in a marriage is creative fidelity.

This means being sensitive to the needs of each other, supporting your partner and being with them emotionally and physically.

3 Couples expect their marriage to progress smoothly onward and upward without any major upheavals or adjustments

It has been suggested that all couples go through three stages in their marriage:

- 1 **Enchantment** – the extended honeymoon stage
- 2 **Disenchantment** – when things won't work out or go wrong
- 3 **Maturity** – feet on the ground, I need you, let's work it out stage, together we can make it work

Often disenchantment is the result of our partner **not** understanding our own home experiences and our personal background.

Complete the following statements and then share your responses with your future partner.

- 1 This is what you need to know about my family life as I was growing up in order to understand me

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2 If I could have changed one thing about my family life as I was growing up, it would have been

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3 Because I want or don't want this to occur in my own marriage and family life I will

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4 My parents have influenced my attitudes towards marriage by

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5 Something from my parents' marriage that I would like to have in mine is

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6 Something from my parents' marriage that I prefer not to have in mine is

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1. A miscarriage

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2. Death of a young child

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3. Major financial difficulty

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4. Being fired from a job

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5. Wife being the “bread-winner” instead of the husband

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6. Major personal illness

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7. Being involved in a major lawsuit of potentially great financial loss and severe emotional stress

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8. Being confined to a small flat instead of the large home you were in for many years

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9. Living in the country instead of the city

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10. Husband quitting his job to go into business for himself

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11. Wife wanting to go to work while leaving three children at home for husband to look after

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12. A child that does not turn out the way you hoped

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13. More children than you planned for

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14. Discovering that you cannot have children

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15. A friend begins to make passes at you or your partner

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16. The in-laws turn hostile towards you

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17. Your husband has to work nights instead of days

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18. Your car is stolen while on holiday

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19. You find yourself attracted to another person

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20. Partner no longer interested in spiritual things

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Frustrations and disappointments are part of life, but how they affect us is basically our choices.

We can allow a disappointment to hamper us and even destroy our marriage.

Another response is to accept the disappointment or hurt, then discover what we can learn from it, then making some new plans or alternatives.

Meditating on the following scriptures will help you to adjust to disappointments and change.

James 1:2-4 [NIV] *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

1 Peter 1:6-7 [NIV] *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

James 1:12 [NIV] *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”*

The situations referred to in these scriptures you had no control over them, they just happened.

The Greek word translated “*perseveres*” is sometimes translated “*fortitude*”, it pictures standing firm under pressure rather than trying to escape.

How will the presence of Jesus Christ in your marriage help you to fulfil your expectations of marriage and accept the ones that are **not** fulfilled?

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