

## ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS FOR MARRIAGE

**Introduction:** It is quite common for couples to enter marriage with false expectations about what their marriage will be like. For example, some couples will assume, because they argue with each other, they married the wrong person. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We are human beings with a flawed nature that is naturally selfish. When we live with someone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we are bound to have moments of weakness where we have disagreements and even arguments. I grew up in a home with 6 boys. We argued all the time, but never once did we consider not being brothers.

Remember, Satan wants your marriage to fail and will use any means possible to cause it to fail. One way to safeguard your marriage against Satan's attacks is to learn what marriage is really like so that you begin with realistic expectations. That's what this entire study is designed to do.

**Consider this statement commonly made after being married for some time:** "This is not what I signed up for!"

That statement alone defines the need for this study. To help you understand "what you are signing up for!"

When you commit to each other in marriage, you are signing up for life. Are you sure you know what you are getting into?

Let's begin our journey to understand what God says marriage really is.

### THE SOURCE OF OUR EXPECTATIONS

What does marriage look like to us? How did we form our opinion of what marriage looks like? Here are a few ways we form our view of what marriage is:

1. **Our Own family**. We remember what our mom and dad's marriage was like. It's the most personal and up-close picture of marriage we have. This is the most common means of forming an opinion about marriage. Sometimes this is a great source of understanding marriage, when your parents had a good and Godly marriage. However, this can also create a skeptical view of marriage if your parents did not have a good marriage.
2. **The World** - Some people may form their opinion about marriage by what they see in the Media or on TV. This is the world's way of propagating a humanistic view of marriage. Remember who the God of this world is, Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4 see notes below). This is probably not the best way to learn about marriage.
3. **Friends** - Often we form our view of marriage based on what we see in our friends and their marriages. It is easy to compare ourselves to each other. However, this also is not very good way to get a true picture of what our marriage will look like. We are all different.
4. **God** - The Bible is, by far, the best source for preparing for and understanding what marriage really is. God is the one who created marriage and He also gave us an instructional manual on how to do it. That instruction manual is the Bible. This is the method we will use.

## THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF MARRIAGE

The best place to get an understanding of marriage is the Bible. That's why Satan will do whatever he can to get us to doubt the Bible and leave it out of our life altogether. Satan has attacked marriages and human beings since the beginning of mankind. In order to have the proper expectations in marriage, we need to understand the spiritual part of marriage. Notice these principles that are critical to having the right expectation in marriage.

### UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY - Satan

*Genesis 3:1 NLT*

*The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"*

*Genesis 3:2 NLT*

*"Of course, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied.*

*Genesis 3:3 NLT*

*"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"*

### UNDERSTAND HUMAN NATURE

We are sinners.

*Rom 3:23 NLT*

*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

*Rom 7:18 NLT*

*And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't.*

We are easily tempted to sin.

*James 1:13 NLT*

*And remember when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.*

*James 1:14 NLT*

*Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.*

*James 1:15 NLT*

*These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

*Genesis 3:4 NLT*

*"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman.*

*Genesis 3:5 NLT*

*"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."*

*Genesis 3:6 NLT*

*The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful, and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So, she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.*

Even though Adam and Eve knew what God had said, Satan lied to them and talked them into doubting God and ultimately disobeying Him. The rest is history, and all mankind has been battling sin ever since.

### UNDERSTAND THE WORLD

The truths about marriage in the Bible are still good today. However, the world (our culture) has done all it can to distort what the Bible has said. This comes as no surprise since God tells us Satan is the God of this world.

*2 Corinthians 4:4 NLT*

*Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.*

The world (the culture we live in) will laugh at the principles of the Bible. They will say you do not love people, or you are discriminating against others. They will do all they can to get you to listen to them and ignore the Bible and their message is powerful. For this reason, it is critical that we have a clear, Biblical picture of marriage before we launch into this life changing decision. We will not last without God.

So, with that in mind, we will try to help you establish Biblical expectations for your life together so that you are not discouraged by false expectations.

**HOMEWORK:** What does marriage look like to you?