

He's – High Expectations Syndrome

She's – Super High Expectations Syndrome

The Golden Rule is widely accepted as a good principle for relationships. When we treat other people right, there's a better chance that they'll treat us right in return. It's only logical. And when you examine the Bible's instructions for marriage, there's a tendency to think it's nothing more than another way of restating the Golden Rule. After all, we should love our spouse the way we want to be loved. And the unstated assumption is that we'll end up being treated better ourselves.

But God's involvement in marriage goes far beyond simply leaving us an explanation of how relationship dynamics work, or teaching us how to behave. God is a real person who interacts in our lives – and our marriages – in real time.

In this session we'll examine Scripture that makes two audacious promises about God's involvement in your marriage. And suffice it to say, it can either work for you or against you. It's confirmation that God is active and involved in your personal circumstances. And He's intensely interested in the outcome.

Once you have dumped everything from the expectation box back into the desire box, what's next? You've still got all these desires, hopes and dreams. What are you supposed to do with them?

“In the same way, younger people should be willing to be under older people. And all of you should be very humble with each other. "God is against the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." Be humble under God's powerful hand so he will lift you up when the right time comes.”

1 Peter 5:5-6 (NCV)

“Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately *and* cares about you watchfully.”

1 Peter 5:7 (AMP)

Peter begins with the general truth that God opposes (resists) the proud ... just like we do. But He gives grace to the humble. What an extraordinary promise! In this context we can think of grace in this way: He gives you what you need in the moment for the moment. He doesn't make unreasonable demands of us. He gives us the ability to do what we need to do. Then Peter follows this up with a general command to humble yourself under God's mighty hand.

This is Old Testament language for declaring your dependency on God. Peter is saying, “Tell God you need Him!” But doesn't this make perfect sense? Who designed you with those desires? Who understands them best? Who knows best how to meet them? And to Whom should we take them to?

God invites us – He gives us permission – to unload on Him! We can talk to Him and be specific. No need to be polite ... you can vent and dump. Why? Because He cares for you.

Your desires and dreams matter to Him even if they don't seem to matter to your partner right now. And in response, you will find the grace to carry on. We've already talked about what happens when you dump your expectations on your spouse. He or she simply wasn't designed to handle them. But we have a heavenly Father who can handle them. So, cast your cares on Him!

As a husband or wife, you can learn everything there is to know about how relationships work and how God designed marriage. Likewise, your spouse can do the same. But sooner or later, the success of your marriage hinges on the quality and effectiveness of your communication as you work through the details of life together.

If communication is clear and honoring, and if there's plenty of it, then both parties gain a tremendous ability to understand and appreciate each other. They can learn how to anticipate each other's needs, and they tend to place sincere value on their spouse's desires.

But communication isn't easily mastered. Sure, it comes easy for some. But for others it can be an ongoing struggle. Depending on your upbringing, it may be completely unnatural to have an intentional conversation about how you feel, or how to improve your relationship.

That's why this session is dedicated to giving you a guide for talking to your spouse about your box of hopes and dreams – your desires. Following these three simple steps, you and your spouse can take a giant step toward a deeper understanding of each other – and how to keep unmet expectations from poisoning your marriage.

After you have cast your cares on God and you are ready to talk with your spouse about what's in the box, here are some practical tips on how to have that conversation ...

1. Confess

Take responsibility for turning your desires into expectations. And make sure you are specific, whether it is the expectation to make more money, keep the house cleaner, be more organized, be in better shape, or spend more time with the kids. Confess your expectations.

2. Ask

- a. Where do you feel pressure to live up to my expectations?
- b. What can I do to make our marriage richer?

Then don't say anything. Just listen. This is just another way of asking, "What's in your box?" But don't ask that. Now, when you are asked this, there may be some things in your desire box that don't need to come out. There are some things that need to stay between you and God. There may be some dreams you are going to have to die to.

3. Reward

Reward your spouse like you did when you were dating. You see, the problem with expectations is that we don't reward people who meet them. "That's their job." "She's supposed to cart the kids around." "He is supposed to mow the grass." So when your spouse gets it right, reward that. Because what's rewarded gets repeated. One specific way to reward is to write thank-you notes and be specific in your gratitude. Sometimes we don't know what is a big deal until someone tells us.

When God created Adam and Eve and put them into the garden, He created the first "us." Not two "I's," but one "us." And that is God's desire for your marriage. And that doesn't happen until you transfer your expectations back into the desire box and you learn to unconditionally love each other.

Exercise/Song: Cast All Your Cares On Him

Reflection Questions

1. Are we struggling in our marriage without God because of pride?
2. Do you believe that God wants to extend His grace to you and your marriage?
3. In what areas are you "waiting for the right time?" Why does God sometimes wait to meet your desires?
4. Do you believe that God is concerned about you and your desires? Are you ready to give Him your worries and concerns?
5. How can you cast your cares upon God?
6. What are some desires that your spouse has fulfilled for you?
7. What are some ways that you can reward your spouse?
8. When will you schedule your first "box talk?"