

Marriage on the Rock

Title: Part 2 – Love Without Expectation

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Transition: Paul Prays & Seats

While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi,” as always, we say “Hi” to everyone joining us on our app or social channels. Let us know where you are watching from and if we can pray for you or serve you in some way.

If you are just jumping in with us today, last week we began a collection of messages called “Marriage on the Rock” and really we have just one goal over the next few weeks. As we dive into God’s Word together we are going to learn how to take our relationship from being on the rocks to being built on the rock! I know that sounds like preacher hype, and maybe it is a little cheesy, but I am convinced the Bible is the most relevant relationship text ever written! It contains the timeless wisdom of God and the life-giving words of Jesus AND if you build your relationship on it you will be able to weather the storms.

You could say this, the Bible is:

The essential guide for anyone who is married.

The cheat sheet for anyone who hopes to be.

So, each week we are adding a new “rock” as we build this relational foundation. Last week we kicked it off by talking about making love... a verb, right, just seeing if you were paying attention. It is so easy to just give marriage our “leftovers” but for a relationship to grow and thrive we have to persistently pursue our spouse.

Today we are going to explore what it would be like to **love without expectation**. AND if you have ever been here for anything we have done on this topic then you know this is *the* most important thing I could ever talk about when it comes to marriage. If we could nail this one thing down I believe we could forget 90% of the marriage advice we read or hear about! So, let’s pretend I am right about this for a second, take some really good notes today, if I am right then you will always have this to go back to. And if I am not right, then all it cost you was a few pen strokes, and we gave you the pen anyway!

So, let’s start here. Every one of us has desires. Would you agree with that? We all have desires, especially when it comes to relationships and marriage. And the thing they all have in common is... I. It’s all about what I want. I desire to have this, I dream of doing that, I want them to be like this. Even if you are a student or single today you are already storing up your bag full of desires and expectations for marriage. Every movie you watch, every song you hear, every couple you know you start taking these mental notes of what I desire in a relationship. Every time you are in a relationship that doesn’t work out, on the other side of it, you are like, “Now, I know what I want. I want someone who will do this or be like that.” Throughout our lives we just start stuffing all these desires and expectations down into a bag we carry around with us.

And every time I do a wedding I stand there in front of two people who have this unbelievable love for each other. In fact, I can’t think of a single couple I have married that while they were both standing there looking each other in the eye with all this love and passion for each other that I thought to myself, they are faking it... I will give this six-months. I have never thought that! Every time I marry someone, and they stand there face to face, I always think, wow they really love each other, look at how they are looking at each other, they are going to make it!

But then here is what we all know. Those same two people who make this vow in front of each other and all their friends and family, maybe even God, to love each other through the good times and the bad times, sickness and health, riches and poverty, they make a vow that only death can separate them. These same two people who have all this love and passion for each other. In 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years not

only don't love each other anymore, but they actually hate each other! Like they hate each other more than any other person on the planet. And it's like how does that happen? How does it go from they are so in love, to all this hate and venom for each other? How does that happen?

Obviously, there are tons of reasons why, and I am not trying to oversimplify your situation, I don't know all the ends and outs of your story, but I do know that one of the things that happens is while two people are standing there about to be married there is something going on that you can't see. What you can't see is that both the bride and the groom have brought their invisible bags of desires and expectations and as soon as they say, "I do" they take their bags and put them onto the shoulder of the other person. All those dreams and wishes and desires and expectations that you have been saving up for years, suddenly get dumped on the shoulders of the other person. But you guys are just too in love, or on occasion, too drunk to realize it until down the road. One day you wake up and this thing starts feeling more and more like a burden you can't possibly carry another day.

In other words when you stand there at your wedding and say those words, "I do" the reason you said "I do" is because you thought the other person *would*. If you want to write something down, this is what I am talking about:

One of the most destructive things in a marriage is when desires become expectations.

Whenever, however this happens: wedding day, after the honeymoon is over, after a few years... but when your bag of desires gets hung around the other person's neck as an expectation it feels like a noose. When you start saying things like, "You owe me this... you owe me..." when you start saying or thinking things like that you have already dumped off your bag onto your spouse.

This is why whenever I give advice to someone who is single and dating really the only thing I tell them is date or marry someone for who they are now, not for who they might be down the road. And I know this kind of makes me sound old school or out of touch, but ladies if you desire to be married to a man who is going to pursue God with you, a guy who loves God, loves His church, and wants to worship with you. If you want to be married to that guy then don't date a guy who isn't doing those things right now! If he is not interested in those things now before the marriage, then he is not going to be interested after you say, "I do." If that is your expectation then just know it is probably not going to happen. Can it happen yes, you could also win the lottery, but it is probably not going to happen.

Guys if you are dating a girl and it's like drama all the time. Drama with her family, drama with her friends, drama with the people she works with, and it just sucks the life out of you. BUT you think once you get married then all that drama will get better... it's just not. There is going to be a lot more of the same once you get married. That's why I say marry someone for who they are now, not for who you think you can make them.

BUT for those of us that are married, even as mediocre as your marriage may seem today, there was a time when you really had something special. And you might not ever admit this, but do you ever wonder what happened to that? Again, not trying to oversimplify your relationship, but the principle at play is:

To get what you once had, you have to do what you once did.

To get what you once had, you have to do what you once did. AND what you did when you were dating is you had fewer expectations of each other!

So, if you have a Bible with you, or if you have the Bible App on your phone, head to **Ephesians 5**, and we are going to look at what the solution is for all this. I know some of you may not believe the Bible is true and

authoritative and that's OK, but I do know this works. I know this works if you apply this to your marriage so don't let it hold you back if you are still skeptical of Scripture. While you are looking for Ephesians Chapter 5, this is going to be tough for some of you, but here is what the summary statement would look like for what we are about to read, you ready:

The solution: your spouse doesn't owe you anything.

What does your spouse owe you after you say, "I do?" Not a thing! Your spouse doesn't owe you anything. That's a little different isn't it? The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5, starting in verse 21, this:

21 SUBMIT to one another out of reverence for Christ.

He's talking to men and women alike. He says you want to have a marriage that rises above, then you have to submit to each other. I know that's a nasty word, but what this is saying is **prioritize the other persons needs above your own**. Make their deal, your deal. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Then he restates this for both women and men, first the ladies:

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands AS YOU DO TO THE LORD.

Paul repeats this and adds "as you do to the Lord." It doesn't say wives submit to your husbands if they are great and watch Hallmark movies with you. It doesn't say wives submit to your husbands if they deserve it. It doesn't say wives submit to your husbands if they have earned it. The Apostle Paul writes this and says wives do this in the same way you submit to Jesus. In the same way you prioritize Him over yourself.

And I know some of you are like, "But have you seen what my man does all day Sunday, he just sits in front of the TV and watches sports all day, he doesn't do a thing to help me around the house!" But this isn't about him. He may be lazy, but this isn't about him. This is about your reverence to Jesus. Paul equates the two here. AND he does the same thing with the men, verse 25:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR HER.

This is saying the exact same thing to the men as it is to the ladies. This verse is saying men; prioritize her needs above your own needs. You need to love your wife in the same exact way that Jesus loved the church. How did Jesus love the church, how did Jesus love people? He gave up his rights and yielded His life for ours!

Guys, this isn't about how loveable she is. This isn't about what's going or not going on in the bedroom. This isn't about whether she has earned it or deserves it. This isn't about her at all. This is about you being willing to lay down your life for her because that is what Jesus did for you.

And I want to be really clear here. Because I know how it is to hear this. As a guy you think, "Lay down my life for my wife... OK if my wife was about to be shot by some thug, yes I would jump in front of her and take the bullet, I would lay down my life for her." That's fine and all, but are you willing to lay down your schedule for her? Are you willing to lay down your dreams and your ambitions for her? Not because she deserves it, but because 2,000 years ago God laid down the life of His Son for you to prove what love really is.

Men and women are you willing to do the same for each other? Will you put her needs / his needs above your own needs? God is saying to us, "I want you to take this debt free relationship we have, paid for by the blood of my Son, and I want you to apply that to your marriage. Your spouse doesn't owe you anything." What God desires for your marriage is this:

Marriage is a covenant. Not a contract.

Do you know the difference between those two? A contract is a legally binding agreement that basically says, "If you do this, then I will do this." A contract is designed to protect your own self-interests, protect your rights. But a covenant is an agreement where I will do this even if you DON'T do this. A covenant is more focused on your responsibilities rather than your rights.

If you are single this is why I say focus on being the right person instead of finding the right person. It's preparation for a covenant relationship, not a contract relationship.

Because in marriage anytime you focus on your rights over your responsibilities what you get are these unconverted intentions. We all do this. We all have unconverted intentions. Like for me; I tend to judge Cheryl on her actions or behavior, but I judge myself based on my intentions. You know what I am talking about? I judge her because she didn't do this, this, or this but I don't hold myself to the same standard because I know my intentions.

Like I will have a moment in my day where I think of her or something she has done and I just want to express to her how much I love her and really appreciate the sacrifices she makes, but then when I get around to texting her, or I see her, life kind of happens or we argue over something else and I never get around to telling her what I wanted to tell her. BUT I still judge how well I love her by my intentions even though I never converted those into actions.

You guys know what I am talking about? That's what happens when you begin to focus on your rights over your responsibilities.

So, in a really practical way I want to give you two things to do, not to insult your intelligence, but because I really want all of us to make this a habit. The first one is:

When you think something good, say it!

You could also write DO IT next to that. Sometimes you think of something nice to do and never do it. So, when you think of something good, say it OR do it! The author of Hebrews says it like this: (Heb 3:13)

13 But encourage one another daily.

And I know how elementary that sounds, but how many times do we miss this? When you think something good, say it or do it.

Ladies you have no idea how much your words of encouragement mean to us guys. I know we kind of act all hard and like it doesn't matter to us, but when Cheryl speaks words of encouragement over me, man! You have no idea what that means to your man when you just open up and share from your heart something kind. I could have every one of you come up after the service, never happens, but let's say everyone, instead of rushing out the back doors got in line to come thank me for my message. That would mean a lot to me. Truly! But it wouldn't compare to Cheryl taking the time to compliment me after the service over lunch... I mean she has seen me naked, she has heard me cuss; she has seen me at my worst (which might be synonymous with naked) so I am telling you it means so much when she encourages me.

Men, same thing. When you think of something kind to say, or something kind to do for your wife, do it! Cheryl tells me this all the time. Women don't care about the flowers or gifts or fancy things. What those things show is the deeper issue. What women want is to know you simply thought of them! You thought of them and that is why you bought flowers or her favorite candy or whatever. So, guys, when you think of

something nice like, "Thank you for keeping up with the house, I know it is a never-ending job, I appreciate your sacrifice so we all can have clean underwear..." when you think of it, say it!

Here's the next really, really practical thing I want to give you on this:

If you want something different, be it!

If you don't like what you are getting, then look at what you are giving. Turn to someone around you and say, "Ouch!" In Philippians 2, the Apostle Paul again writes this:

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

Imagine how different your marriage, or relationships in general, would be if you did nothing else but applied this one verse. Do nothing (no thing) out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility value others above yourselves, in other words, put their needs above your own needs. This isn't saying you need to think less of yourself, it just means think of yourself less! It's the same principle we have been looking at all morning. Verse 4:

⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the INTERESTS OF THE OTHERS.

There is nothing revolutionary about this, BUT this will save you hours in the counseling office. It is also extremely hard for us because like you, I am mainly interested in the things I am... interested in. I am mainly interested in the things that interest me. That's just human nature.

Like I am a huge NASCAR fan, that has always interested me since I was a little kid, some of you think that makes me a hick and it is just cars going around in circles. Me on the other hand I have like sub-zero interest in all those reels you keep posting, but you keep posting them anyway. Why? Because, I am mainly interested in the things that interest me, not the dog that did the amazing thing or the clip of Tay Tay at the game.

So, this verse, while it may seem simple, is extremely counter-intuitive. This is saying we need to not just be interested in the things that interest us, but we need to take an interest, above our own, in the interests of others. By the way, parents, this is how you win the heart of your child, amen?

BUT do you know how I know you can do this? Because you did it while you were dating! That's why you joined his fantasy football league, you hate football let alone fantasy football, but you were trying to be interested in the things he was interested in. That's why you watched all those romantic comedies, you hated every minute of them, but you watched 'em and pretended to like it because you wanted to be interested in the things that interest her. So, this is possible in the context of a relationship, you have already proven you can do it when there is something that you really want.

Let me tell you how powerful this is. Ladies, I know this will be hard to believe for some of you, but there is most likely another woman who would like to be with your man. It's true. I know... BUT do you know how she is going to try to tempt him to be with her? It's not the short skirt at the office. She is going to pretend to take an interest in the things that interest your husband. Guys, there is another man out there that would like to be with your wife! (Some of you are like, can I get his number) BUT do you know how he is going to do it? It's not by going to the gym 5 days a week and getting ripped. He is going to pretend to take an interest in the things that interest your wife. I'm just telling you because I see this all the time.

That's how powerful this is, that's why this isn't a suggestion in this verse, it's a command. Verse 5:

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Again, same thing as Ephesians 5. What's the motivation for all of this? The motivation is not because they have earned it or deserve it, the motivation is to do for others what Christ has already done for you. We see that in v6:

⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he **HUMBLED HIMSELF by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

In a Godly, Christ-Following marriage the reason you submit to one another, the reason you put their needs above your own needs is not because of them, it's because of Jesus, it's about reverence for what He did for us.

And maybe you are not a God or Jesus person today, so let me tell you why this works. As long as I dump my desires on Cheryl as expectations, as long as I focus on my rights in the relationship, what happens is all of the love and intimacy gets drained right out of our marriage. Because what happens is you begin to think your spouse owes you this. She's my wife, it's what a wife is supposed to do, she owes me this. He's my husband, it's what a man is supposed to do, he owes me this for all that I do. And when that happens, your relationship transitions from a covenant relationship into a contract relationship. Or you could say it becomes a debt / debtor relationship.

AND here's the problem with that. If your expectation for your wife is up here. And let's say she meets that expectation. How much credit does she get for that? None right? Because all that did was get them back to zero! Everything is all even. No one is having a party because you finally are the husband I always expected you to be.

Think of it this way. You have never received a love note from your wireless company for simply paying your bill on time each month. *"Dear Mr. Moon, we just want to let you know how much we appreciate you paying your bill on time each month, it makes us smile each time, we think about you often. Love Verizon."* You have never received that note! You know why? Because you signed a 3-year contract to pay \$156 a month in exchange for those new iPhones you are rocking. When you meet your end of the contract no one celebrates you because you are just doing what is expected of you. You're back at zero.

This is why some of you feel the way that you feel in your marriage. As long as you are just keeping up with the expectations of the other person you never get anywhere. You never feel truly valued or appreciated. And the romance and love and intimacy are a distant memory. Why? Because you are only at zero at best! All you did was what is expected of you. No one is fighting and yelling. No one is calling a lawyer. But there is not a lot of love there. That special thing you had when you said I do is missing. Why? Because at best you are at zero.

SO, let's make this even more practical. Men if your expectation going into marriage was you were going to have sex like 5 or 6 times a week. Let's say that was your expectation, you were still in your 20's. But you say, "I do" and hand over the bag full of expectations. Here's what you have done now though. It is now impossible for your wife to show you love in this area unless she *exceeds* your expectations, which in this case would be like every day! I can see the horror on some of your faces ladies. But your wife gets no credit if all she does is meet your expectations.

Ladies, if your expectation is that he is going to sit on the couch with you and just hold you and listen to you talk and share for like 2 hours, and not try to fix things, just to listen and cuddle with you non sexually. If that

was your expectation then what you have done is take away his ability to love you in that way. Because, on the rare occasion he actually does that, he just gets back to zero at best!

Do you get what I am talking about here? Do I need to keep going, or can we move on? Because I know some of you are already thinking, "Well, what am I supposed to do, just give up on my desires and dreams for our marriage?" Absolutely not. Your desires are legitimate, in fact I will go a step further than that, your desires are even God given! But the minute you take a legitimate, God given desire and put it on the shoulders of your spouse as an expectation, you owe this to me, this is my right (as a husband as a wife), the moment you do that you have killed the possibility of love and intimacy.

So, I have some homework for you. It's a two-part assignment. The first part is list every expectation you have of your spouse, your boyfriend or girlfriend, or what you expect your future relationship to be like. Just write them out, as many as you can think of, every expectation, even the smallest of things, list it. Then when you are done realize the longer the list the fewer the opportunities your spouse has to show you love in that area. This isn't to make you feel bad; it's just a reality check.

And if you are struggling to know if something is an expectation or not, just look at the things you show sincere thanks for. If you don't consistently show sincere thanks in that area, then it probably has moved from desire to expectation. So list them out.

The second assignment is read: *{YOU CAN ADD QUESTION ON SAME SLIDE LATER}*

Philippians 2:1-18

Each day this week. It will take you all of like 3 minutes; you can do it at work while you are bored. But, for 7 days I want all of us to read Philippians 2:1-18. And this may sound kind of weird or mystical if you don't do this, but each day when you read Philippians 2:1-18 I want you to ask God this question:

God, how does this apply to my relationship?

God how does this apply today to my marriage, my dating, my future spouse, to me being the right person to even date. Do that as you read this each day.

I said this when we started, I think this is like 90% of marriage right here, I mean imagine what your marriage could be like if all of these expectations that drain the life and love out of your marriage were put back where they used to be as a desire, a dream, a wish.

Imagine how much fun your relationship could be again if you spent your time and energy trying to unearth those desires and dreams and trying to make them come true for each other.

Imagine what that would feel like, instead of working as hard as you can trying to live up to all these expectations, instead you put your effort into making dreams come true. Imagine how different that could be.

Let me pray for you guys and ask God to give you a vision for this kind of marriage.

[PRAYER TIME]