



# WHAT EVERY COUPLE THINKS THEY KNOW

## WHAT EVERY COUPLE THINKS THEY KNOW, PART 1: WHAT'S IN YOUR BOX?

In every relationship, we bring with us a box of expectations. Some of us may have a smaller box with very few expectations; while others of us have larger boxes with significant expectations. As we move through the relationship, we think we know what is in each other's box of expectations. Often, we think our box of expectations even matches. Yet, couples face all kinds of challenges in their relationships. Common challenges arise in communication, finances, values and lifestyle choices, or husband and wife roles. Understanding how expectations work will have a huge effect on the relationship between you and your spouse.

**BIG IDEA: When desires become expectations, relationships crumble under the weight.**

### OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER / HOMEWORK

To start the group off you could have each group member pick out one or two of these and talk about your expectations going into marriage compared with your current experience. This is not the place to embarrass your spouse, but to laugh together at our flawed expectations. Or, couples can talk through these by themselves during the week.

1. How are household responsibilities taken care of?
  - a. Cooking
  - b. Cleaning
  - c. Taking care of the kids
  - d. Laundry
  - e. Yard work
  - f. Home repairs
  - g. Car maintenance
  - h. Taking out the trash
2. How do you expect decisions will get made?
  - a. I make the call
  - b. They make the call
  - c. We'll decide everything together
  - d. We'll consult on the big ones
3. Marriage is supposed to be...
  - a. Exciting, spontaneous
  - b. Comforting, planned
4. Conflict in marriage will be handled by...
  - a. Stuffing it all inside
  - b. Letting it all hang out
5. When arriving home from work...
  - a. We'll talk about the day
  - b. We'll give each other space to rewind
6. Holidays will be spent...
  - a. His family
  - b. Her family
  - c. Alternating between us
  - d. Just us
7. Evening meals will consist of...
  - a. Home cooking
  - b. Take out
  - c. Go out
  - d. Fend for yourself
8. Bedtime attire will be...
  - a. As little as possible
  - b. As comfortable as possible
9. As little as possible have sex
  - a. Twice a day
  - b. Twice a week
  - c. Twice a month
  - d. Twice a year

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have the following affected your expectations going into marriage? With each, have you tried to copy or avoid this picture of marriage?
  - a. What you have seen on TV
  - b. What you have read in books or magazines
  - c. What you have seen in other homes
  - d. What it was like in your home
2. Have you ever felt like you just couldn't measure up—that you just couldn't meet the expectations you felt were placed upon you? Maybe this occurred with your parents, your spouse, your boss or someone else. How did this affect the relationship?
3. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Proverbs 13:12*

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. Proverbs 13:12 (NIV)*
4. Have you ever tried to make your spouse more like you? Does it work? What message does this give your spouse?
5. From early childhood, most people dream of getting married someday. We have vivid mental images of what it will look like and feel like to finally be a married person. We imagine where we'll live, what we'll drive, where we'll go on vacation, and how many children we'll have. Many people have detailed ideas of what they'll talk about, what they'll do on Saturday afternoons, or what they'll eat on Wednesday nights. What are some of the dreams of marriage you always envisioned before you were married?
6. *What's in your box?* One of the most important things you can do is determine an answer to this question. You need to have a clear understanding of your own expectations. Expectations begin as desires—desires that God put in us. We were all born with desires for respect, admiration, companionship, acceptance, intimacy, sex and love, among others. It is when we turn desires into expectations that we begin to turn our marriage from a covenant relationship to a contract relationship. Do you currently feel like you view your marriage as a contract between two parties or a covenant between two committed people?
7. Expectations create a Debt/Debtor relationship in marriage. It becomes about what your spouse "owes" you. *What do you feel like your spouse owes you?*
8. Are you guilty of either of these symptoms of shifting desires to expectations? Explain.
  - a. A lack of expressing gratitude—you complain about something not getting done but rarely thank your spouse when it does get done.
  - b. A lack of acts of service—you see something that needs to be done and do nothing about it is because you expect someone else to do it.
12. Read 1 Peter 4:8. Remember, when you commit to one another you must not hold grudges. Commit to prioritize forgiveness and love as you navigate through your box of expectations.

## MOVING FORWARD

The first step in transforming your expectations is to identify them. This week identify your current expectations for marriage. What do you feel like your spouse owes you?

## CHANGING YOUR MIND

Meditate on the following verses this week: 1 Peter 3:1-2 and 3:7; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Ephesians 5:33. How do these apply to your marriage?

WHAT EVERY COUPLE THINKS THEY KNOW