
Great Expectations

Dealing with Disappointment

Sometimes we set ourselves up for discouragement. I refer to our tendency to set up expectations that are subsequently not met.

What causes you to experience disappointment? Someone or something has failed to fulfill your expectations. You had it all set up in your mind: the way a certain situation would work out, the way a certain person was going to respond. But it never happened.

See if some of these circumstances don't sound painfully familiar:

- I'm not happy in my work. I had great hopes when I first got this job. I never realized it would be like this.
- This marriage is a drag! On our wedding day I thought it would all be so different.
- I thought he was my best friend and now look at the way he is treating me. I'll never trust anyone else again.
- I thought this relationship was going someplace. Then I found out he was seeing someone else. How could he do such a thing?
- We were all expecting God to heal my mother. When she died I lost all my faith in God.
- If we had known that our children would turn out like they did we never would have had them. What a disappointment!

Recognize any of those? They're all self-made if you really think about it, because each was based upon an expectation of which the actual experience fell short. We set up mental images that are unrealistic, unfair, or biased. Then we focus on these. There is no room for flexibility on the part of others or circumstances. It is our blueprint of how things must go if we are to be happy. When they don't go that way we crash and burn. Due to such failed expectations many people are locked up tightly in their own, personally-made dungeons of disappointment.

Some Failed Expectations in the Scriptures

1. Read II Kings 5:1-11 (Especially verse 11.) What were Naaman's expectations here? What nearly happened when they were not met? What is a good lesson to take from this passage?

2. Read Matthew 20:1-16 (Especially verse 10). The expectations of this passage are very natural. Yet was the employer wrong for not meeting those expectations? Were the workers right in objecting to what their employer did? Is there a lesson here for us?

Our Expectations of Others

3. Is it wrong for us to have high expectations of others? What are some dangers of placing great expectations in others?

4. Read Psalm 103:14. How can the truth of this verse help us avoid expectations that are too high?

5. Read John 2:24-25. What was Jesus reluctant to do here? Why?

6. What sort of expectations should I have of others?

Our Expectations of God

7. Read Luke 19:11. What were the expectations of first century Israel regarding the kingdom? (See also Acts 1:6) How was this expectation wrong?

8. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. What are some of the ways our expectations differ with God's thinking? How does this set us up for disappointment?

9. Read I Corinthians 2:14-16. What are some expectations of unbelievers that cause disappointment and disillusionment?

Others' Expectations of Us

10. Read Luke 15:11-24. The young man in this parable probably shattered his father's great expectations of him. How did the father treat him?

11. What do we need most when we have failed the expectations of others? How should this temper the way we deal with those who fail us?

Application

12. What are several areas where other's failures to live up to your expectations are causing you to be miserable?

13. What should you do about these?

14. What are some areas where you are failing the expectations of others . What would you like them to do about it?

Nag you

Feel miserable

Get angry with you

Give you some space

Be reasonable

Other

15. A man once said, "I have no expectations of others. That way I'm not disappointed." Is this a wise way to approach the problem? Which is the best approach?

Have no expectations of others

Have high expectations of others

Have realistic expectations of others

What help would Colossians 3:2 be?