

How I have missed being in contact with you over the summer... and how blessed I am by those of you who noticed!! It is time to get back on track with this marriage series. I don't have much time, but I feel God's nudging to get this going again. I will give what I can and trust Him to provide everything you need. He always does.

If someone you know is struggling in their marriage, please forward this to them. Other lessons are available on the website, [www.hopeintheLord.org](http://www.hopeintheLord.org).

Trusting Him,  
Jennifer

If this is your first issue in this marriage series, WELCOME!! These lessons are meant to build on each other. Before you start, please visit [http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable\\_PDF\\_Bible\\_Study\\_Files.html](http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable_PDF_Bible_Study_Files.html) to download the first three lessons in the series.

### Eliminating Expectations

Today we are going to take a look at how our expectations affect our marriage. I'll let Michael Landon set the stage with his opinion of expectations, "I don't have expectations. Expectations in your life just lead to giant disappointments."

How true that is! How often do we ruin perfectly good vacations, holiday dinners and family experiences because they don't live up to some great expectation we had for them? We miss the joy of what it *is* because we're too busy looking around at what it *isn't*.

*Can you think of a time when you were unable to enjoy a wonderful experience because you were too disappointed in what it wasn't?*

Great expectations lead to great disappointments. In marriage, disappointments lead to bricks. How many bricks have been laid in the wall between you and your husband because of your unmet expectations?

If we are going to strengthen our marriages instead of the walls in our marriage, we have to eliminate our expectation problem.

Think for a moment:

*In what ways has your husband recently disappointed you?*

*How did your disappointment affect your marriage?*

*If your expectations had been different, could you have avoided the disappointment?*

Although we all claim to know that our husbands are not perfect, we expect them to be perfect anyway. Or at least the way we want them to be. We want them to meet our expectations of who we think they should be. And then, when they are who God created them to be instead of who we expect them to be, we get upset.

When Jim and I were first married, we listened to a radio host who often reminded callers, "You knew that when you married him, what do you expect now?" You knew who your husband was when you chose him for your spouse. Are you expecting him to be something different now? If so, *where are those expectations leading you?*

Our husbands have a mind of their own. They will do things the way they think they should be done and when they think they should be done. They will prioritize what they think is important. They will not always be interested in what we are. Anytime we expect them to be who we want them to be, rather than who

they are, we are only setting ourselves up for disappointment – disappointment that destroys our marriage.

*Are you accepting your husband for who he is, or are you continually disappointed in who he is?*

I'm not saying that our husbands don't have room for improvement; we all do. But we cannot change them. Only God can change them. Every time you catch yourself fretting over something you wish your husband would do differently, or steeped in sighs of disappointment over something that didn't live up to your expectations, stop yourself and turn your grievances over to God. Pray for your husband. Pray for your marriage. Pray for God to show you your role in all this and to help institute the changes that need to take place. Your prayers and your willingness to listen to God are the only things that will truly make a difference in your marriage.

And God is so mighty to answer the prayers of His people that He is the one thing we can have high expectations of and *never* be disappointed in. He may not give you the answer you want, but He will give you the answer you need – every single time. He will never let you down.

Present your requests to God and wait in expectation for Him to answer them. Know that He hears your voice. Turn to Him to have your needs met and let your husband simply be your husband. Don't miss the joy of a wonderful husband because you're too busy looking at who he isn't to enjoy who he is.

*What actions will you take to start eliminating expectations in your marriage?*

Pray and ponder. There is more to this topic of expectations that we'll look at in coming weeks.

**For those of you in deep pain in your marriage:** *First, your husband should never physically harm you or your children or verbally abuse you or your children. If he does, please call 1-800-799-SAFE or visit [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org). For those of you who are not abused but in a loveless marriage, my heart goes out to you. Please continue to pray for God's guidance and continue through this study. We can't change our husbands, but we can allow God to change us and pray for Him to bring our husband to new life.*



### **Prayer that Destroys Walls and Builds Marriages**

Oh, Lord, I praise you that you are perfect. I praise you that you are mighty to meet my every need. I praise you that you are all I will ever need. Father, forgive me my selfishness and pride that make me want to control my home, my husband, my life. Help me to be humble and content. Give me your eyes to look upon my husband with gracious love. Father, help me to surrender the control of my marriage and my husband to you. Help me see how my expectations are building walls and destroying my marriage. Give me faith to trust you in this Lord. Thank you for hearing me Lord, show me how to wait for you in hopeful expectation. Thank you, sweet Jesus, for healing my marriage. Amen.



### **Truth that Destroys Walls and Builds Marriages**

*Pray for God's wisdom and then begin.*

1. Look back at your last lesson. What changes did you make? What were the results? Where do you need to recommit to change? (You can download previous lessons at [www.hopeintheLord.org](http://www.hopeintheLord.org))

2. Consider and answer these questions from the text above:

- Can you think of a time when you were unable to enjoy a wonderful experience because you were too disappointed in what it wasn't?
- In what ways has your husband recently disappointed you?
- How did your disappointment affect your marriage?
- If your expectations had been different, could you have avoided the disappointment?
- You knew who your husband was when you chose him for your spouse. Are you expecting him to be something different now?

*Strengthening Your Marriage: It's all about Choice #4*

- Are you accepting your husband for who he is, or are you continually disappointed in who he is?
  - What actions will you take to start eliminating expectations in your marriage?
2. Explain how you have experienced disappointment by putting your hope in others and looking for them to meet your expectations.
3. Now consider these verses. Read them several times and roll them around in your mind for a while.
- Isaiah 49:23 Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed."
  - Romans 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.
  - Psalm 22:5 They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.
  - Philippians 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.
  - Psalm 5:3 In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.
4. What do these verses teach you about where we should place our hope and expectations?
5. What changes do you need to make?
6. Write a prayer expressing what is on your heart and asking God to help you where you need it. If you don't truly believe He will answer your prayers, if you are not able to expect and look for an answer, pray for faith to believe.



**Action that Destroys Walls and Builds Marriages**

- What specific disappointment will you let go of this week?
- What specific expectation of your spouse will you eliminate?
- What will you change to ensure that you spend time in your Bible and in prayer every day?



Only God can not only meet, but exceed our expectations. Only God will never disappoint us. Only God will fulfill us. Please, oh please, stop expecting your husband to be more than he can be. Give up and give everything to the Lord. Turn your disappointments over to Him and see what He has for you.

I know some of you are in deep pain and your hearts are very hurt in your marriages. I know for some of you it seems that all hope is gone. Please don't give up hope – just try hoping in something new, something mighty that will change your life! Hope in Jesus. If you're not sure what that means, get in touch with me. I would love to share with you.

In Him in who we find hope that does not disappoint,  
Jennifer