

# *Expectations*

<sup>28</sup>The hopes of the godly result in happiness, but the *expectations* of the wicked are all in vain.  
Proverbs 10:28

<sup>3</sup>When you came down long ago, you did awesome things beyond our highest *expectations*. And oh, how the mountains quaked! Isaiah 64:3

<b>Great Expectations</b>		
Wherever he went Jesus exceeded people's expectations.		
<b>What was expected</b>	<b>What Jesus did</b>	<b>Reference</b>
A man looked for healing.	Jesus also forgave his sins.	Mark 2:1-12
The disciples were expecting an ordinary day of fishing.	They found the Savior.	Luke 5:1-11
A widow was resigned to bury her dead son.	Jesus restored her son to life.	Luke 7:11-17
The religious leaders wanted a miracle.	Jesus offered them the Creator of miracles.	Matthew 12:38-45
A woman who wanted to be healed touched Jesus.	Jesus helped her see it was her faith that had healed her.	Mark 5:25-34
The disciples thought the crowd should be sent home because there was no food.	Jesus used a small meal to feed thousands, and there were leftovers!	John 6:1-15
The crowds looked for a political leader to set up a new kingdom to overthrow Rome's control.	Jesus offered them an eternal, spiritual kingdom to overthrow sin's control	A theme throughout the Gospels
The disciples wanted to eat the Passover meal with Jesus, their Master.	Jesus washed their feet, showing that he was also their servant.	John 13:1-20
The religious leaders wanted Jesus killed and got their wish.	But Jesus rose from the dead!	John 11:53; 19:30; 20:1-29

***Being God's leader is not just gaining recognition, holding a position, or being the boss. It requires planning, hard work, courage, and perseverance. Positive expectations are never a substitute for doing the difficult work. And in order to lead others, you need to listen for God's direction in your own life.***

Pressures, demands, **expectations**, and tasks push in from all sides and assault our schedules. Do this! Be there! Finish that! Call them! It seems as though everyone wants something from us—family, friends, employer, school, church, clubs. Soon there is little left to give, as we run out of energy and time. We find ourselves rushing through life, attending to the necessary, the immediate, and the urgent. The important is all too often left in the dust. Our problem is not the volume of demands or lack of scheduling skills, but values—what is *truly* important to us.

Our values and priorities are reflected in how we use our resources—time, money, strength, and talent. Often our actions belie our words. We say God is number one, but then we relegate him to a lesser number on our “to do” lists.

Twenty-five centuries ago, a voice was heard, calling men and women to the right priorities. Haggai knew what was important and what had to be done, and he challenged God’s people to respond.

In 586 B.C., the armies of Babylon had destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem—God’s house, the symbol of his presence. In 538 B.C. King Cyrus decreed that Jews could return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple. So they traveled to Jerusalem and began the work. But then they forgot their purpose and lost their priorities, as opposition and apathy brought the work to a standstill (Ezra 4:4, 5). Then Haggai spoke, calling them back to God’s values. “Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?” (1:4). The people were more concerned with their own needs than with doing God’s will, and, as a result, they suffered. Then Haggai called them to action: “This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you! Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD” (1:7, 8). And God’s message through his servant Haggai became the catalyst for finishing the work.

Although Haggai is a small book, it is filled with challenge and promise, reminding us of God’s claim on our life and our priorities. As you read Haggai, imagine him walking the streets and alleys of Jerusalem, urging the people to get back to doing God’s work. And listen to Haggai speaking to you, urging you to reorder your priorities in accordance with God’s will. What has God told you to do? Put all else aside and obey him.

## Courage

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### **WHERE DO I GET THE COURAGE TO GO ON WHEN LIFE SEEMS TOO HARD OR OBSTACLES SEEM TOO BIG?**

DEUTERONOMY 20:1; PSALM 27:1; ISAIAH 41:10; JOSHUA 1:9

True courage comes from God, understanding that he is stronger than our mightiest foes and that he wants to use his strength to help us.

### **HOW DO I FIND THE COURAGE TO FACE CHANGE?**

GENESIS 46:3-4

Change may be part of God’s plan for you. If so, what you are headed into will give you joy and satisfaction beyond your **expectations**.

EXODUS 4:13

To experience fear is normal. To be paralyzed by fear, however, can be an indication that you doubt God’s ability to care for you in the face of change.

2 SAMUEL 4:1

If you take all of your courage from another person, you will eventually be left with nothing when that person is gone. If you trust in God, you will have the strength to go on even when circumstances collapse around you.

### **HOW DO I FIND THE COURAGE TO ADMIT MY MISTAKES?**

2 SAMUEL 12:13

To admit our mistakes and sins is to open the door to forgiveness and restoration of relationships.

### **ARE THERE CONSEQUENCES TO A LACK OF COURAGE?**

LUKE 23:13-25

Standing up for what is right can get you in trouble from corrupt people. Failing to stand up for what is right can get you in trouble with God.

*Promise from God: Joshua 1:9*

<sup>9</sup>I command you—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

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## **Love**

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### **MUST I LOVE OTHER PEOPLE? WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO?**

JOHN 13:34; 1 JOHN 2:9; JOHN 13:35; 1 PETER 4:8; 1 JOHN 4:12

Being a Christian comes with certain *expectations*, and one of them is that we will love others. Our Christian conduct is proof as to whether we love each other, and loving each other is proof that we belong to Christ.

### **WHAT ARE SOME SPECIAL THINGS THAT COME FROM A LOVING RELATIONSHIP?**

PROVERBS 10:12; 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

The gifts that come from love are many. Here are a few: (1) forgiveness, (2) patience, (3) kindness, (4) love for truth, (5) love for justice, (6) love for the best in a person, (7) loyalty at any cost, (8) belief in a person no matter what. Love does not allow for (1) jealousy, (2) envy, (3) pride, (4) a haughty spirit, (5) selfishness, (6) rudeness, (7) a demand for one's own way, (8) irritability, (9) grudges.

### **DOES GOD REALLY LOVE ME? HOW CAN I KNOW?**

HOSEA 2:19; JOHN 3:16; 1 JOHN 4:7-12; ROMANS 5:5; ROMANS 8:35-39

### **HOW SHOULD WE SHOW OUR LOVE TO GOD?**

MATTHEW 10:42

By showing our love to needy people whom God loves.

JOHN 14:21

By obeying him.

JOHN 21:15-17; HEBREWS 6:10

By guiding and helping Jesus' followers.

## PSALM 122:1

By worshiping him and praising him for his love to us.

### *Promise from God: Romans 8:39*

<sup>39</sup>Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## CORNELIUS

A centurion whose history is narrated in Acts 10. He was a “devout man,” and like the centurion of Capernaum, believed in the God of Israel. His residence at Caesarea probably brought him into contact with Jews who communicated to him their **expectations** regarding the Messiah; and thus he was prepared to welcome the message Peter brought him. He became the first fruit of the Gentile world to Christ. He and his family were baptized and admitted into the Christian church (Acts 10:1, 44-48). (See CENTURION.)

## MESSIAH

(Heb. *mashiah*), in all the thirty-nine instances of its occurring in the Old Testament, is rendered by the Septuagint “*Christos*.” It means anointed. Thus priests (Ex. 28:41; 40:15; Num. 3:3), prophets (1 Kings 19:16), and kings (1 Sam. 9:16; 16:3; 2 Sam. 12:7) were anointed with oil, and so consecrated to their respective offices. The great Messiah is anointed “above his fellows” (Ps. 45:7); *i.e.*, he embraces in himself all the three offices. The Greek form “*Messias*” is only twice used in the New Testament, in John 1:41 and 4:25 (RV, “Messiah”), and in the Old Testament the word Messiah, as the rendering of the Hebrew, occurs only twice (Dan 9:25, 26; RV, “the anointed one”).

The first great promise (Gen. 3:15) contains in it the germ of all the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament regarding the coming of the Messiah and the great work he was to accomplish on earth. The prophecies became more definite and fuller as the ages rolled on; the light shone more and more unto the perfect day. Different periods of prophetic revelation have been pointed out,

- (1.) the patriarchal;
- (2.) the Mosaic;
- (3.) the period of David;
- (4.) the period of prophetism, *i.e.*, of those prophets whose works form a part of the Old Testament canon. The **expectations** of the Jews were thus kept alive from generation to generation, till the “fulness of the times,” when Messiah came, “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” In him all these ancient prophecies have their fulfillment. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the great Deliverer who was to come. (Compare Matt. 26:54; Mark 9:12; Luke 18:31; 22:37; John 5:39; Acts 2; 16:31; 26:22, 23.)

Abel was the second child born into the world, but the first one to obey God. All we know about this man is that his parents were Adam and Eve, he was a shepherd, he presented pleasing offerings to God, and his short life was ended at the hands of his jealous older brother, Cain.

The Bible doesn't tell us why God liked Abel's gift and disliked Cain's, but both Cain and Abel knew what God **expected**. Only Abel obeyed. Throughout history, Abel is remembered for his obedience and faith (Hebrews 11:4), and he is called “righteous” (Matthew 23:35).

The Bible is filled with God's general guidelines and **expectations** for our lives. It is also filled with more specific directions. Like Abel, we must obey regardless of the cost and trust God to make things right.

Jesus singled out three of his 12 disciples for special training. James, his brother John, and Peter made up this inner circle. Each eventually played a key role in the early church. Peter became a great speaker, John became a major writer, and James was the first of the 12 disciples to die for his faith.

The fact that his name is always mentioned before John's indicates that James was the older brother. Zebedee, their father, owned a fishing business in which they worked alongside Peter and Andrew. When Peter, Andrew, and John left Galilee to see John the Baptist, James stayed back with the boats and fishing nets. Later, when Jesus called them, James was as eager as his partners to follow.

James enjoyed being in the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, but he misunderstood Jesus' purpose. He and his brother even tried to secure their role in Jesus' Kingdom by asking Jesus to promise them each a special position. Like the other disciples, James had a limited view of what Jesus was doing on earth, picturing only an earthly kingdom that would overthrow Rome and restore Israel's former glory. But above all, James wanted to be with Jesus. He had found the right leader, even though he was still on the wrong timetable. It took Jesus' death and resurrection to correct his view.

James was the first of the 12 disciples to die for the gospel. He was willing to die because he knew Jesus had conquered death, the doorway to eternal life. Our **expectations** about life will be limited if this life is all we can see. Jesus promised eternal life to those willing to trust him. If we believe this promise, he will give us the courage to stand for him even during dangerous times.

Josiah never knew his great-grandfather Hezekiah, but they were alike in many ways. Both had close, personal relationships with God. Both were passionate reformers, making valiant efforts to lead their people back to God. Both were bright flashes of obedience to God among kings with darkened consciences, who seemed bent on outdoing each other in disobedience and evil.

Although Josiah's father and grandfather were exceptionally wicked, his life is an example of God's willingness to provide ongoing guidance to those who set out to be obedient. At a young age, Josiah already understood that there was spiritual sickness in his land. Idols were sprouting in the countryside faster than crops. In a sense, Josiah began his search for God by destroying and cleaning up whatever he recognized as not belonging to the worship of the true God. In the process, God's Word was rediscovered. The king's intentions and the power of God's written revelation were brought together.

As the Book of God's Law was read to Josiah, he was shocked, frightened, and humbled. He realized what a great gap existed between his efforts to lead his people to God and God's **expectations** for his chosen nation. He was overwhelmed by God's holiness and immediately tried to expose his people to that holiness. The people did respond, but the Bible makes it clear that their renewed worship of God was much more out of respect for Josiah than out of personal understanding of their own guilt before God.

How would you describe your relationship with God? Are your feeble efforts at holiness based mostly on a desire to "go along" with a well-liked leader or popular opinion? Or are you, like Josiah, deeply humbled by God's Word, realizing the great gap between your life and the kind of life God **expects**, and realizing your deep need to be cleansed and renewed by him? Humble obedience pleases God. Good intentions, even reforms, are not enough. You must allow God's Word to truly humble you and change your life.

Many older brothers and sisters have an irritating tendency to take charge, a habit developed while growing up. We can easily see this pattern in Martha, the older sister of Mary and Lazarus. She was used to being in control.

The fact that Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are remembered for their hospitality takes on added significance when we note that hospitality was a social requirement in their culture. It was considered shameful to turn anyone away from your door. Apparently Martha's family met this requirement very well.

Martha worried about details. She wished to please, to serve, to do the right thing—but she often succeeded in making everyone around her uncomfortable. Perhaps as the oldest she feared shame if her home did not measure up to **expectations**. She tried to do everything she could to make sure that wouldn't happen. As a result, she found it hard to relax and enjoy her guests and even harder to accept Mary's lack of cooperation in all the preparations. Martha's frustration was so intense that she finally asked Jesus to settle the matter. He gently corrected her attitude and showed her that her priorities, though good, were not the best. The personal attention she gave her guests should be more important than the comforts she tried to provide for them.

Later, following her brother Lazarus's death, Martha could hardly help being herself. When she heard Jesus was finally coming, she rushed out to meet him and expressed her inner conflict of disappointment and hope. Jesus pointed out that her hope was too limited. He was not only Lord over death; he was the resurrection and the life! Moments later, Martha again spoke without thinking, pointing out that four-day-old corpses are well on their way to decomposition. Her awareness of details sometimes kept her from seeing the whole picture, but Jesus was consistently patient with her.

In our last picture of Martha, she is once again serving a meal to Jesus and his disciples. She has not stopped serving. But the Bible records her silence this time. She has begun to learn what her younger sister already knew—that worship begins with silence and listening.

First impressions can be deceiving, especially when the image created by a person's appearance is contradicted by his or her qualities and abilities. Saul presented the ideal visual image of a king, but the tendencies of his character often went contrary to God's commands for a king. Saul was God's chosen leader, but this did not mean he was capable of being king on his own.

During his reign, Saul had his greatest successes when he obeyed God. His greatest failures resulted from acting on his own. Saul had the raw materials to be a good leader—appearance, courage, and action. Even his weaknesses could have been used by God if Saul had recognized them and left them in God's hands. His own choices cut him off from God and eventually alienated him from his own people. From Saul we learn that while our strengths and abilities make us useful, it is our weaknesses that make us usable. Our skills and talents make us tools, but our failures and shortcomings remind us that we need a Craftsman in control of our lives. Whatever we accomplish on our own is only a hint of what God could do through our lives. Does he control your life? His leadership abilities did not match the **expectations** created by his appearance.

## How God Works in the World

God's Will	What God wants done—he works through...		
	↓ Natural Order	↓ Miracles	↓ Providence
God's Action	↓ God set into action through Creation a normal working of his universe. He also revealed his <b>expectations</b> of people through his Word and people's consciences.	↓ God breaks into the natural order to respond to the expressed needs of people.	↓ God overrules the natural order to accomplish an act that people may or may not have requested.
Examples from Esther	↓ God gave Esther natural beauty.  ↑ Esther planned a way to save her people.	↓ God allowed Esther to speak to the king.  ↑ The people prayed and fasted.	↓ God allowed Mordecai to overhear a plot.  ↑ Mordecai trusted God to accomplish what was impossible in human terms.
People's Will	What people want done—we either...		
	↑ Plan	↑ Pray	↑ Trust and Obey
Action We Can Take	↑ Can make plans based on the order and dependability of God's creation. Know and obey his words.	↑ Can ask God to intervene in certain affairs while realizing that our knowledge and perspective are limited.	↑ Can trust that God is in control even when circumstances seem to indicate that he is not.
	or...		
Mistakes We Can Make	↓ Disobey	↓ Demand	↓ Despair
	↓ Can violate the natural order, disobey God's commands.	↓ Can assume that we understand what is needed and expect God to agree and answer our prayers that way.	↓ Can assume God doesn't answer prayer or respond to our needs and live as though there is nothing but the natural order.

## Spiritual Unfaithfulness

Spiritual adultery and physical adultery are alike in many ways, and both are dangerous. God was disappointed with his people, because they had committed spiritual adultery against him, as Gomer had committed physical adultery against Hosea.

Parallels	The Danger
Both spiritual and physical adultery are against God's law.	When we break God's law in full awareness of what we're doing, our hearts become hardened to the sin, and our relationship with God is broken.
Both spiritual and physical adultery begin with disappointment and dissatisfaction—either real or imagined—with an already existing relationship.	The feeling that God disappoints can lead you away from him. Feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction are normal and, when endured, will pass.
Both spiritual and physical adultery begin with diverting affection from one object of devotion to another.	The diverting of our affection is the first step in the blinding process that leads into sin.
Both spiritual and physical adultery involve a process of deterioration; it is not usually an impulsive decision.	The process is dangerous because you don't always realize it is happening until it is too late.
Both spiritual and physical adultery involve the creation of a fantasy about what a new object of love can do for you.	Such fantasy creates unrealistic <b>expectations</b> of what a new relationship can do and only leads to disappointment in all existing and future relationships.



## Righteousness and Wickedness

Proverbs often compares the lifestyles of the wicked and the righteous, and makes a strong case for living by God's pattern. The advantages of righteous living and the disadvantages of wicked living are pointed out. The kind of person we decide to be will affect every area of our lives.

	<b>Righteous</b>	<b>Wicked</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<i>Outlook on life</i>	Hopeful	Fearful	10:24
	Concerned about the welfare of God's creation	Even their kindness is cruel	12:10
	Understand justice	Don't understand justice	28:5
<i>Response to life</i>	Showered with blessings	Covered with violence	10:6
		Plot evil	16:30
	Give thought to their ways	Put up a bold front	21:29
	Persevere against evil	Brought down by calamity	24:15, 16
		Hate the honest	29:10
<i>How they are seen by others</i>	Are respected	Do not endure	13:15
		Lead others into sin	16:29
	Conduct is upright	Conduct is devious	21:8
	Are not to desire the company of godless people	Plot violence	24:1, 2
	Others are glad when they succeed	Others hide when they rise to power	28:12
	Care for the poor	Unconcerned about the poor	29:7
	Despise the wicked	Despise the godly	29:27
<i>Quality of life</i>	Stand firm	Swept away	10:25
	Delivered by godliness	Trapped by evil desires	11:6
	No real harm befalls them	Constant trouble befalls them	12:21
	Income results in treasure	Income results in trouble	15:6
	Avoid evil		16:17
		Fall into constant trouble	17:20

	Are bold as lions	Are fearful constantly	28:1
	Will be safe	Will suddenly fall	28:18
<i>Short-term results</i>	Walk securely	Will be found out	10:9
	Chased by blessings	Chased by trouble	13:21
<i>Long-term results</i>	God protects them	God destroys them	10:29
	Evil people will bow to them	Will bow to the righteous	14:19
		Will be punished for rebellion	17:11
<i>Eternal expectations</i>	Never uprooted	Will not remain	10:30
	Earn a sure reward	Earn deceptive wages	11:18
	Attain life	Go to death	11:19
	End only in good	End only in wrath	11:23
	Will stand firm	Will perish	12:7
	Have a refuge when they die	Crushed by their sins	14:32
<i>God's opinion of them</i>	Delights in the good	Detests the perverse	11:20

*My expectations unfulfilled lead to frustration. Frustration leads to aggression or depression through a loss of hope. Changing my expectations to a more biblical perspective can result in less frustration and greater appreciation.*

**What are my expectations for:**

- 1. Life?**
- 2. My marriage?**
- 3. My spouse?**
- 4. My children?**
- 5. My future?**
- 6. My job?**
- 7. My success?**
- 8. My health?**
- 9. My spiritual well-being?**
- 10. Me?**

**Definition:** \Ex`pec\*ta"tion\n. [L. expectio. exspectio: cf. F. expectation.]

1. The act or state of expecting or looking forward to an event as about to happen. ``In expectation of a guest.''  
--Tennyson.

My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. --Ps. lxii. 5.

2. That which is expected or looked for.

Why our great expectation should be called The seed of woman. --Milton.

3. The prospect of the future; grounds upon which something excellent is expected to happen; prospect of anything good to come, esp. of property or rank.

His magnificent expectations made him, in the opinion of the world, the best match in Europe.  
--Prescott.

By all men's eyes a youth of expectation. --Otway.

4. The value of any chance (as the prospect of prize or property) which depends upon some contingent event. Expectations are computed for or against the occurrence of the event.
5. (Med.) The leaving of the disease principally to the efforts of nature to effect a cure.

{Expectation of life}, the mean or average duration of the life individuals after any specified age.

Syn: Anticipation; confidence; trust.

## What?!? No Bananas?

**We expect ever more conveniences, from tropical fruit 12 months a year to cars that can actually move in traffic.**

**How do our expectations affect our happiness and well-being?**

"Where are your bananas?" It seemed like a logical question to ask. For all of my forty trips around the sun, bananas were a key item to place in the grocery cart. For the first time I could recall, the banana bin was empty. So I asked a store worker where the bananas were.

"We don't have any," he replied. "We'll be getting some in tomorrow."

It took me a few moments to absorb this information. "What do you mean you don't have any?" I thought. "Every store has bananas." True, sometimes they are almost green enough to pass for

bent cucumbers. And they occasionally appear to have lost an arm-wrestling match with a watermelon. But there are always bananas of some sort in the store.

Then it dawned on me just how foolish my expectations were. I live well north of New York City. Even if somebody invented a way to cultivate them in the Great White North, it was early April, and they would not bear fruit at that time of year. For goodness sake, outside the snow was falling and inside I was expecting tropical bananas!

### **Expect a traffic jam, too**

If you commute in a big city, you might have noticed traffic grinding to a halt. Why? Look to bananas for the answer. Just as I was frustrated by my grocery expectations not being met, millions of commuters are frustrated daily by their traffic expectations not being met.

Consider some of the major machines in your life, such as television. Twenty years ago, we would watch a TV show. Ads would come and ads would go, but we would watch it from start to finish. Who does that these days?

"What were you watching, honey?"

"I dunno. But I think I caught 412 channels."

And if ever you should lose the converter ... I know, I know, this is a family publication, so we'll cut the profanity.

And what about the Internet? If a web site takes more than five seconds to load, where are we?

"Did you order that book from Amazon for me?"

"I dunno. But I think I reached warp speed with my clicking finger. Ouch! I think I sprained it."

If fancy TV gadgets and high-speed Internet feed our impatience, what about car ads? Vrrroooooommm. See how fast this car can go? Wow. It does zero to 60 in 5.2 seconds ... in the ad. And zero to zero in half an hour stuck on the Santa Monica Freeway.

As we expect our machines each day to break yesterday's speed record, our cars seem to be slowing to a crawl. That's because more and more people are squeezing onto the same road space trying to zoom faster and faster and honking their horns louder and louder (because we all know that cars move faster when their horns get honked, right? Especially when they get honked LONG and LOUD, right?).

Is it just me, or is this poor math? A realist would expect traffic to get a little slower each year, which just proves how rare realists really are. Every one of us expects to move faster and faster.

And I expect bananas on the store shelf even when it is snowing outside. So what can we do? Easy, we can grumble and complain. We can shout abusive words at store clerks and other drivers. We can honk our horns (not recommended in the fruit section).

Or we can step back and ask ourselves logical questions about what we should realistically expect. For instance, "Can I really expect bananas on my grocer's shelves in the middle of winter when I know the truck is stuck in traffic?"