



**Educate
+ Engage**



FAMILY
MATTERS



Expect Expectations

OVERVIEW

Defining expectations is a critical component in developing healthy relationships. Whether it's in coaching, mentorship, dating, friendship, or marriage, communicating expectations will help the relationship soar. Knowing expectations in many settings where relationships are at play will give you confidence.

Expectations go above responsibility. Your mom might ask you to take out the trash (responsibility) but wants you to do it while cleaning up dinner without complaining (expectation). Unless you understand her expectation for completing the task, you might find yourself getting annoyed due to your mom's nagging. Though this is simple, communicating expectations has the ability to filter through a lot of relational conflict.

Let's try something as an illustration. (You'll want to have paper and pens or pencils prepared ahead of time for this—enough for everyone to have one piece of paper and a pen or pencil.) When I say go, I want you to draw me a picture of a horse. Go! (Give students about 1-2 minutes to draw.) Alright it's time to stop drawing. Go ahead and hold up your pictures. (Predetermine in your mind your "expectations" for drawing a horse. Maybe you want it to be small, have a long tail with spots on it. The person that is closest to your expectations wins.) Okay everyone, it looks like we have one winner. I know you all are wondering why (he/she) is the winner, but they met my expectations. Explain how knowing more about what you wanted or expected would have qualified more people to win.

Scripture Passage

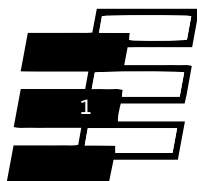
Romans 12:10 (NIV)

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

EDUCATE

The Bible has much to say about how we should treat one another. Knowing what others expect of you is a way to honor and prefer them in love. Our lesson today will help us apply the importance of developing expectations in our daily relationships with others.

Before we dive in, I'm curious to know, why do you all think expectations are important?



Point 1: Seek to understand and prefer others.

Taking the time to understand others such as their strengths, weaknesses, personality, and temperament will better your relationship. It's not just understanding their point of view or perspective, but the context for who they are as a person. Learning other personalities and understanding where they are coming from will serve you well in just about any kind of relationship.

When conflict arises, having this background and understanding will especially help. Doesn't it feel good when someone asks, "how can I help you?" or "what can I do to help you succeed?" This is an example of preferring others. If we can seek to understand and prefer others, it will help in establishing the expectations within a relationship.

Going back to our example with your mom and taking out the trash, if you understand that your mom wants to help you build responsibility and that you prefer her because you love her, you'll probably be more quick to remember when it's time to clean up dinner.

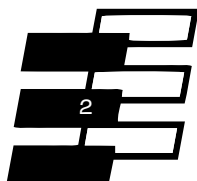
How can you be more intentional about understanding and preferring others?

Point 2: Know what you need.

The other side of the coin is knowing what you need and want. A healthy relationship is both understanding and preferring others, but also knowing how to communicate what you need and desire. If you don't know how to communicate what you need and want in a relationship, you might find yourself feeling confused and frustrated. You can communicate what you need and want without seeming bossy or manipulative. Communicating what you need and want is just as important for the other person as it is for you.

What are some practical ways that you can assure others know what you need and want?

Going back to our example once again with your mom asking you to take out the trash, if you find that you're more likely to remember at a different time in the day, it's okay to communicate something like, "Hey Mom, I know that you want me to take the trash out every day, but I think I would be more likely to remember before I walk out the door to go to school. Would you be okay with this?" I know that this is a really simple example, but the principle can be applied in this way.



Point 3: Keep an open door.

Expectations change as dynamics in a relationship change. For example, expectations change from friendship to dating and ultimately marriage. You're not going to expect someone you are dating to manage your finances, but it is often expected in marriage that someone keeps tabs on the money flow. Keeping an open door to adjust expectations as needed will help the flow of the relationship as it changes. As long as you approach others in love and humility, it's okay to seek understanding and also know what you need in a relationship.

Closing

In closing today, we have discussed that setting expectations in a relationship is one way that we can prefer other people. Seeking to understand and prefer the desires of others but also communicating what you need is a recipe for getting along with other people and it causes us to eliminate unnecessary conflict. Finally, we learned that keeping an open door with others is essential because relationship dynamics can change over time.

ENGAGE

If there is a relationship in your life that you feel is lacking clear expectations, I challenge you this week to think about how you can apply something you learned today. Maybe you need to have a conversation with a parent, friend, or teacher. Taking the time to prefer the needs and desires of other people is a Christlike way of living. We are called to serve, and knowing what others expect from us but also what we can expect from them will ultimately help us have a healthy and functioning local body of believers.

