

Biblical Expectations For Marriage

1. Each of us will become a partner and soul mate offering unconditional love, understanding, and support. We will be best friends.
2. Neither of us will expect the other to meet all of our needs or take sole responsibility for our personal happiness. We will give each other space to breathe and have a life.
3. We will leave our fathers and mothers and create a new, independent, special family unit.
4. We will have one healthy fight or disagreement a week. Confrontation concerning our unmet personal needs will be believed and not dismissed.
5. We will take regular vacations and “honeymoons” throughout our marriage as we mend and enhance our intimacy.
6. We will use credit carefully as we become wise stewards of our finances.
7. My mate will be faithful and committed to me.
8. Either of us will be able to initiate marriage counseling, and the other will be willing to go. Our marriage will be constantly growing with individual and relational changes and improvements.
9. We will have regular, satisfying sexual interaction.
10. We will enjoy a growing spiritual life together with prayer and Bible Study.

Source: Dr. Douglas Rosenau, (2002). A Celebration of Sex: A Guide To Enjoying God's Gift of Sexual Intimacy, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Identifying Symptoms

Reflect on these questions. If some of these experiences describe your growing-up years, you may be sure they are reflected in the way you deal with life and in your relationships with others and with God.

- Did you lose a parent by either divorce or death?
- Were either of your parents absent from home a great deal?
- Was one of your parents critical or perfectionist?
- Did either parent look to you to be his or her confidant?
- Were you strongly tied to one parent?
- Is it difficult for you to hear your mate or siblings express any negative comments about your family of origin?
- Were your feelings acknowledged and validated?
- Did you experience a traumatic event in your child/adolescent, and how did others respond to you?
- Did you experience abuse or neglect in some form?
- Did you come from a rigid home, possibly due to religious expectations?
- Was either of your parents alcoholic? Or were they dry but had an alcoholic parent themselves?

Other symptoms: (these may have been common in your family of origin and are likely present in your current relationships)

- Unspoken family rules such as:
 - o "Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel."
 - o "Only _____ is allowed to be angry."
- Sarcasm- means literally to 'tear or rip away flesh.'
- Hidden feelings- from others and yourself
- Ridicule and humiliation
- Need to maintain control.
- Difficulty with unexpected changes

Three options:

1. We can spend a lifetime blaming our current condition on our past;
2. We can ignore our past and its results in our present;
3. We can go through the process of healing our past in order to set our present free.

Leaving and Cleaving

Genesis 2:24 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Leaving:

1. Physical Separation: There must be a physical separation from parents in order to be able to “cleave” to one another. Close physical proximity to parents may be a symptom of emotional dependence, which can be a hindrance to the couple’s relationship.
2. Emotional Severance: Emotional severance from parents is also necessary for the marital relationship. If one or both parties have experienced some type of abuse or dysfunction in the family of origin, it is often difficult for the proper emotional “leaving” to take place. The abuse or dysfunction usual acts as an emotional bond (bondage) to the family of origin.
3. Spiritual Severance: You can not have a vital relationship with God based on someone else’s experience or lack of one. You must grow in your own relationship with God.

Cleaving: (To bond together)

1. Physical Bonding: Usually refers to bonding through the sexual experience. Intercourse is never just a physical act, but impacts our emotional and spiritual lives as well. This also requires a lack of interference from our families of origin or circle of friends in ways that impact our relationship negatively. (ex.- speaking against our mates or being critical of them, invasion of our boundaries)
2. Emotional Bonding: Requires emotional safety and feeling that one is understood. Our mates may not “get” or agree with everything we are trying to express to them, but we must feel they value us and are willing to listen to our hearts.
3. Spiritual Bonding: In order to be able to bond spiritually with our mate, we must first remove all of the debris, whether past or present, that cumulates as a result of living in this world and from the choices we make. This is best done with the help of Christ, when we are willing (involves our will) to bring this area of our lives to Him.

Sharing Withholds

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Romans 12:18

We have positive things and negative things that we withhold in our relationships. Once a week for ten minutes, share your withholds with one another.

1. Ask: “Would you like to share withholds?”
2. If partner agrees, write on scrap paper two positives and one negative withhold that you have had in the last 48 hours.
3. By turn, share as follows:
 - a. Share one positive withhold.
 - b. Partner responds with “Thank-you” or “Thank-you for sharing that information.”
 - c. Share the negative withhold.
 - d. Partner responds with “Thank-you.” No other conversation or response is allowed at this time.
 - e. Share the remaining positive withhold.
 - f. Partner responds with “Thank-you.”
4. The remaining partner then shares in the same format as above. They must stick to their original 3 withholds.
5. No further response or discussion is allowed for at least 30 minutes. It takes 20-30 minutes for our threat receptors to return to normal in the presence of a perceived threat. Discussing negative withholds while in a state of defensive arousal is counterproductive to building positive communication experiences in your relationship.

Source: Les and Leslie Parrott, (2005). AACC World Conference 2005. Nashville, TN.

Tips For Healthy Sleep

1. Go to sleep and wake up at the same time.
2. Limit the amount of time sitting awake in bed.
Note: If you can't sleep, get up and do something else.
3. Don't take a nap during the day unless you are working rotating shifts.
4. Avoid exercise just before going to sleep.
5. Begin doing relaxing activities thirty to sixty minutes before going to bed.
Ex: Take a warm bath; Relaxing reading, not related to work or studies; Subdued lighting and soft music; etc.
6. Practice deep breathing and relaxation exercises as you listen to quiet music.
7. Don't look at the clock after going to bed. Don't obsess about it.
8. When intrusive thoughts crowd in, shift thoughts to pleasant memories or recite verses. Your mind can only think about one thing at any moment.
9. Eliminate alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine from your diet. These substances interfere with the ability to rest and in the case of alcohol, while helping ease you to sleep, will often wake you prematurely.
10. Be patient while your body attempts to re-establish normal sleep/wake rhythms.

What Stimulation Your Baby Needs To Become Smart

The first three years of life are critical to healthy brain development. William Staso, a school psychologist in Orcutt, California wrote in his book *What Stimulation Your Baby Needs To Become Smart* (1995), recommendations for seven critical periods in your child's development.

- Month 1: Eliminate background distraction (radio, television, washing machine) so your baby is optimally relaxed and attentive to your talking, singing, or other foreground activity.
- Months 1-3: For proper neural articulation, emphasize contrasts (light versus dark colors, low versus high pitch, simple versus complex timbre, rough versus smooth textures). Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that children whose fathers were actively involved in the first six months of their care scored higher on subsequent measures of intellectual and motor development.
- Months 3-5: For visual development, use pictures of baby's real-world objects (spoons, cups, wagons, etc.) as a part of play activity.
- Months 6-7: Emphasize cause and effect (turn the knob and the door opens), locations of various objects ("Where's the kitty? There she is!"), and functions of environment objects ("What does the ball do? Bounce! See!").
- Months 7-8: Emphasize sound as a signal of impending events (running water and a bath, car in the driveway and "Fonz's back!").
- Months 9-12: Explore motor and sensory skills and how they combine (turning the faucet and feel the water). Twelve-month-olds can remember behaviors they have observed for thirty seconds for up to one week. By around twelve months of age, infants typically learn one or two new behaviors daily simply by observing people in their environment.
- Months 13-18: Explore objects in the environment; this is the time to make the environment especially diverse and rich. Explore sequences and relationships (build towers of diverse shapes, make trains of different sizes- bigger, smaller, bigger, smaller....). Psychologist Harlene Hayne finds that eighteen-month-olds can remember observed behaviors for up to one month.

Source: Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D., (1999). The Owner's Manual For The Brain. Bard.

When To Seek Professional Counseling

There are times when individuals and families may need professional help in coping with and recovering from changes, loss or stressful times in business or personal life. Counseling is advised before situations reach a crisis or to quickly find direction to help stabilize a crisis.

Persons dealing with one or more of the following issues may benefit from professional counseling.

- Depression and anxiety
- Anger and resentment
- Communication problems
- Premarital and marital counseling
- Difficulty in building and maintaining Satisfying relationships
- Constant worry and stress management
- Coping with chronic illness or stress
- Sexual abuse or trauma recovery
- Impaired thinking or confusion
- Divorce recovery or blended family stress
- Behavioral problems with family members
- Grief and loneliness
- Sleeping difficulties or loss of appetite
- Low self-esteem and self-destructive behavior
- Obsessive behaviors
- Impulsive behaviors
- Child and adolescent issues
- Parenting issues

Asking for help is one of life's most difficult tasks, but is also the first step in change and growth.

Not sure? Call to arrange a free half hour consultation to help you decide.