

Marital Expectations

We all have issues in our relationships. These issues may lead to marital discord and unhappiness. Resolving our issues should help us regain marital happiness. By definition, if all our marital issues were resolved we should have a happy marriage.

Issues fall into two broad categories. We can have sin issues or satisfaction issues. Sin keeps us separated from one another and from God. If we have sin issues in our marriage we need to resolve these first. Satisfaction issues tend to keep us frustrated and unhappy and are mainly based on our marital expectations. If our expectations are met we feel satisfied and therefore happy. If our expectations are unmet we feel dissatisfied and unhappy.

We need to examine our marriages for sin and satisfaction issues. We need to resolve the sin issues before we can resolve the satisfaction issues. If we resolve the sin issues so there is no longer sin in the marriage we should be able to resolve the satisfaction issues. If we cannot resolve the satisfaction issues it is probably because there are unresolved sin issues. Therefore we will look at the sin issues first.

Since love is first always sacrificial, I need to examine myself initially to see if there is any sin in me. It is always easier to see the sin in others.

Complete the exercise below to see if there are any sin areas you need to seek forgiveness for first before addressing the satisfaction issues in your marriage.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE/AGAPE/FROM GOD

1 CORINTHIANS 13

Love Is the Greatest

¹If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. ³If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. ⁶It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

⁸Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. ⁹Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! ¹⁰But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.

¹¹It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. ¹²Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

¹³There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

Characteristics of My Love

Please read and respond to the following questions after first reading the passage above. If you believe you are always or even mainly behaving or demonstrating a characteristic answer Yes. If you believe you are doing it at least half of the time answer Sometimes. If you believe you are doing it less than half the time to not at all answer No. You will see that it is sometimes positive to answer Yes and sometimes negative. Read each question carefully and consider well before answering as truthfully as you can.

1. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Patient?
2. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Kind?
3. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Jealous?
4. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Boastful?
5. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Proud?
6. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Rude?
7. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Demand My Own Way?
8. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Irritable?
9. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Keep A Record Of When I Have Been Wronged?
10. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Glad About Injustice (when someone else gets hurt unfairly, "it's about time")?
11. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Rejoice When The Truth Comes Out?
12. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Give Up?
13. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Lose Faith?
14. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Always Hopeful?
15. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Endure Through Every Circumstance?
16. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Abusive?
17. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Am I Committing Adultery With Something or Someone Else? (Work, children, an affair, etc.)
18. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Have I Given Up Caring What Happens To The Other Person? (Apathy)
19. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Do I Have Something In My Life That I Prioritize Over or Is More Important Than The Other Person (other than God)? (Addictions, drug, alcohol, sex, gambling, etc.)
20. Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No ___ Have I Abandoned The Other Person? (Left them to fend for themselves and not take any further responsibility for their care or welfare)

Forgiveness and Repentance

The nice thing about Sin is that God provides a remedy for it. If I believe that any of the negative characteristics are evident in me or the other person I need to seek forgiveness. Forgiveness starts with God.

As I examine the above are there characteristics or areas in my life that I need to ask forgiveness from God for?

Yes ___ No ___. These are the characteristics or areas I need to seek forgiveness from God for: (Be specific)

Are there areas or characteristics I need to repent and seek forgiveness from the other person after first being forgiven by God?

Yes ___ No ___ (Again be specific)

After completing the above exercise with the inclusion of actually seeking forgiveness from God, seeking forgiveness from my spouse, granting forgiveness to my spouse, and accepting forgiveness from God and my spouse, I can turn to seeking marital satisfaction by dealing and negotiating satisfaction issues.

What are the issues that remain that create dissatisfaction for me in our marriage/relationship?

First let us examine the issues. List below those issues you believe are interfering with your marriage being or becoming the marriage you desire. Be specific and focus on both you and your spouse. In other words, if there was no sin in your marriage and if all the following issues that caused you to be dissatisfied with your marriage were resolved you would be satisfied with your marriage.

These are the non-sin issues that are creating dissatisfaction in our marriage/relationship.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Based on the above non-sin issues here are my expectations for the marriage/relationship.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

A simple way to think about this process is:

Love + Like = Lust

Or translated more explicitly,

***Sacrificial love*, which is my behavior based on my beliefs and is therefore under my control since it is my choice based on my commitment,**

When added to

***Negotiable like*, which is my spouse's behavior, what I see that he/she says or does or doesn't say or doesn't do, based on my expectations,**

Leads to
My satisfaction or desire and fulfillment.

In marriage there are no winners or losers. Either both spouses win or both lose. When we negotiate we do so out of a willingness to sacrifice to give and not to get. In marriage we are no longer two people but one person. What I have my spouse has and vice versa. What are you willing to give to meet your spouse's expectations? Please indicate from the above non-sin issues which marital expectations you would be willing to adjust, compromise, or negotiate on and which if any you believe are non-negotiable and why.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Assuming there is no sin in the marriage/relationship and you have successfully adjusted or negotiated your expectations in the marriage is there any other reason that this marriage cannot remain together and give you the satisfaction you desire? (circle Yes or No and explain Yes)

- Yes, in addition there is/are the following issues/factors to consider:

- No, I would be satisfied and committed to this marriage/ relationship if all the above were resolved.

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Witness _____ Date _____