
EXPECTATIONS AND EXAMPLES

Have you ever noticed that having expectations can get us into great trouble? Unmet expectations can certainly ruin a mood, or even cause a mood, whichever the case may be!

As a young married I was blessed to attend a Christian conference where the speaker addressed the topic of "expectations." Little did this young romantic heart know that she had already mentally listed a litany of expectations for her future, and of course, expected my poor hubby to make them all come true. Most of my expectations were totally unrealistic, and many were misplaced, for it is not possible that mortal man can fulfill the desires of a heart that were created and placed there by an infinite, almighty God so that we might seek Him. I was a bit naive, and try as others might, there is no one who can become our "all in all" like the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone knows the needs that no one else can fill. Unlike our husbands and friends, He really can read our minds!

As we look at today's lesson, take time to humble yourself before the Lord and let Him meet you where you are. May He help you focus on what He has for you today.

Not only can we have expectations of others, but the world can expect a lot from us, too. As women, we have responsibilities, roles to fulfill, and if anyone in the vicinity knows that we are a Christian, you can believe they are watching to see if we live up to the expectation of that.

Paul, also, says in verse 9 ,

"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,
practice these things".

Paul's relationship with the church in Philippi had grown as they witnessed him in many situations. Even now, as they hear from him while he is in jail, they hear him still proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. His steadfast testimony and commitment to living for Christ is evident, and he has taught them, written to them, exemplified for them, the things that have led him to experience God's peace. I'm sure he didn't do it perfectly, he even says so in other letters, but still he says, "follow my example."

Would we be willing to say that to someone else when it came to the way we trust and live for God?

What example would you like to be for others to follow?

Read the following verses and note who is the example, and what, if any, is the desired result:

Matthew 5:16

John 13:14-15

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

Philippians 2:5-8

Philippians 3:17-21

I Thessalonians 1:6-7

I Timothy 1:15-17

Titus 2:3-5

I pray that is our goal, to become the mirror reflecting the very glory of God to those around us.

There are lives filled with peace and inner joy exemplified for us and if we are to attain that level of response we must learn to apply the things Paul has taught. We must think in accordance with God's perspective as we recall what His word says, truth that He has written for us. Which, of course, means we need to know God's word!

That's why I'm so thankful you are studying, seeking to know His word. I know you will find His word a blessing as you begin to see how it fits into your life. There's been no greater stabilizer in my life than the word of God, but I have to remember it, call it to mind, in order for it to do the work that was intended.

Our mindset plays a huge part of having His peace. That is why this protocol described in Chapter four is so important if we are to grow in Him.

Read Isaiah 26:3 and fill in these blanks: The _____ of mind _____ will keep in _____, because he _____ in _____.

Our mind is to be what?

We know from these passages that God is a God of peace. He is the very source of peace, and when we do what Paul has described, we can experience God's peace.

Is there an area in your life where you are struggling to have peace?

Paul says not only does he know how to have God's peace, but he has "learned" contentment. Yes, contentment is a learned behavior. We're right back to that whole "transforming the mind" thing. YOU and I CAN learn to be content in every circumstance, especially if we have followed Paul's example and instruction in the previous verses.

Contentment is obviously not reliant upon circumstances, for Paul most assuredly had needs during his imprisonment. But, he also recognized that God provided for him during those years, one, through others, but also, through helping Paul adjust his requirements for contentment. We're not always so keen on it happening that last way, are we?

Remember this letter from Paul is a sort of "thank you" letter to the Philippians because when they found out where he was imprisoned they sent a gift to him. Paul says he is not bringing this up because there have been unmet needs, he wants to affirm to them that he has learned that what he has is sufficient - First of all, and most importantly, he has Christ, and, secondly, because Christ is his everything, he does not need what others have. This is an important lesson for each of us. Don't you think?

Remember Paul's words, "to live is Christ, to die is gain"? That was his mindset. We need to learn how to be content with whatever God has provided, either through others, or through the power of His Spirit who is able to carry us through any situation.

Are you able to echo his words, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances"? If not, perhaps now would be a good time to offer that to God. Use the guidelines that Paul has established, and see if it doesn't work.

REVIEW

- 1) Expectations can be a problem.
- 2) Examples are to our benefit. The Bible gives us many examples, some teach us what not to do and others are ones we should exemplify: Matthew 5:16, John 13:14-15, 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, Philippians 2:5-8, Philippians 3:17-21, I Thessalonians 1:6-7, I Timothy 1:15-17, Titus 2:3-5 We are examples too.
- 3) Our mindset has great effect on our level of peace: Isaiah 26:3
- 4) Contentment is a learned behavior
- 5) We have all we need in Christ Jesus. His grace is sufficient.