

*WELL, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? (Part 1 of 2)*

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

We all came into marriage with expectations — some realistic, some not so realistic. “My wife ought to be like Carol Brady.” “My husband ought to be like Ozzie Nelson.” “And my children ought to be like Beaver Cleaver.” But soon after the vows are said, reality sets in.

REALITY — Ooooooooh — what life *actually is*. REALITY — the expectation slayer. But wait, they’re not dead! Expectations still live! They have just crawled underground to the murky recesses of our minds.

Somewhere, deep inside — even after large doses of reality — we still believe, “My wife should treat me lovingly and always be concerned with my needs.” “My husband will stop loving me if I don’t please him.” “Doing housework is Woman’s work. I shouldn’t have to do my wife’s work.” “A man is supposed to do the fixing and muscle work around the house.”

So...what expectations did you carry into marriage? More importantly, what expectations are you hanging onto even in the face of reality? Expectations are mighty sneaky, because they are based on what we think life **ought to be**. “Well, I **ought to be** treated lovingly, shouldn’t I?” “My life really **ought to be** better, shouldn’t it?” See how easily this kind of thinking leads to distortion? In order to maintain our **ought to be’s**, we have to tell ourselves lies like, “I **deserve** to be treated lovingly.” “I **deserve** to have a better life.”

These lies lead us right down the primrose path to **bondage**. We get tied up in ourselves, wrapped

completely in self absorption. We become enslaved to self. “I **must** be treated lovingly.” “I **must** have a better life.” All we can think about is, “What am I getting out of this relationship?” This, dear ones, is **bondage**. And this bondage, just like any other kind of bondage, leads to **misery**. We start to see everything our mate says or does as being a conspiracy against us. “She’s doing this to aggravate me!” “He’s just trying to hurt me!” What a miserable way to live! Our expectations drive us down the road to misery.

On the one hand, expectations are based on what **ought to be**, and on the other hand, REALITY is based on **what is**. Taking it one step further, reality is **what is** evaluated by the **Truth of God’s Word**. You see, if we don’t base **reality** on truth, then our perception of **reality** could be almost anything, including lies. But if we evaluate **reality** by God’s Word, then we can be sure we have gotten hold of the Truth. Nothing else can keep us honest as we look at our circumstances. Our tendency to be self absorbed will make sure we see circumstances from a *self* point of view. But when we honestly look at our situation, our mate, our children through Scripture, we will see God’s point of view in the matter.

Seeing our lives from God’s point of view leads to **freedom** — freedom to focus on others instead of ourselves, freedom to serve one another, and freedom to give others the benefit of the doubt. We do not have to be in bondage to our own self absorption. We can be free to love our mates, to love our children,

to love even our mothers-in-law. And this kind of **freedom** leads to **joy**. This is the kind of freedom Galatians 5:13-25 is talking about. *You...were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love....the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (NIV).. This is what REALITY evaluated by the **truth of God’s Word** leads to. Sounds like a much better place than **misery**, doesn’t it?

However, most of us Christians believe, “Yes, the Holy Spirit wants to produce His fruit in my life, but other people keep me from experiencing His fruit. I don’t have love, joy, peace and patience because my husband is not... or my wife is not... or have you met my kids?” Somewhere deep inside, we really believe that other people make us miserable. But the **truth** is, that power is ours alone. And it all starts with whether we choose to live in **reality** based on the **truth of God’s Word**, or choose to hang on to our expectations of what **ought to be**.

How do we know this is true? Because God’s Word says, *As a man thinks within himself, so is he* (Proverbs 23:7, KJV). In other words, the thoughts you let live in your mind — your thot-talk — determine what you will be....miserable or joyful. And in 1 Peter 1:13-15 we are told, *Therefore prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform*

## What did you expect (cont')

to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do (NIV). Perhaps you are more familiar with the way verse 13 begins in the King James: *Gird up the loins of your mind*. This is the picture of a Roman soldier who would “gird up his loins” in preparation for battle. He would gather the loose edges of his skirt (Sorry guys, this was before zippers and pants.), pull them up between his legs, and tuck them securely into his belt. So we are to gather the edges of our minds (especially the self absorbed edges) and tuck them into our belt. Do you know what **our belt of spiritual armor** is called in Ephesians 6? It is the “belt of truth.” Well, what do you know? When we make the choice to tuck our minds into the belt of God’s truth, we are choosing to live in **reality**, not in what **ought to be!**

If we choose not to **gird up** our minds and tuck our thot-talk into the belt of **God’s truth**, then we are choosing to hang on to our expectations of what **ought to be**, and our whole family will reap the consequences. Remember the way it happens? We expect our mate to be a certain way (**expectations**). When our mate is not the way we expect, our thot-talk fills up with “poor me” thoughts

and other lies that focus on ourselves. It’s like an **old tape of lies** we play in our minds: “Poor me. I deserve better. If my mate would only....” This **self absorption** leads us to become angry or anxious, because we are not getting what we think we deserve. And these feelings lead us to bursts of anger and resentment, or make us think we must manipulate to get what we want out of our mate.

When we hold on to our list of expectations, we leave ourselves wide open for disappointment. We are upsetting ourselves over what we can not change, and eventually we will act out our disappointment, anger and anxiety in ungodly ways. See why Proverbs 23 says, “As we think within ourselves, that is the **what we will be**”?

God does not want us to live in **misery**. He has a better place for us to live — **joy!** But we have to choose to tuck our minds into His belt of truth. Psalm 51:6 says, *Surely you [God] desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place*. Our inner, inmost place is where we do our thinking and deciding — our minds. God wants our minds to be filled with His truth. He even promises to teach us wisdom. How about that? God will give us the wisdom we need to bring our

expectations into alignment with reality.

We want to tell you a story about Sandy and Kevin, and how God helped them do this. While you read the story, look for (1) the expectation Sandy was holding on to, (2) her thot-talk about her expectation — her old tape of lies, (3) her resulting ungodly behavior, (4) the change in her thot-talk to truth, and (5) the results of that change.

Sandy sat through her husband’s Sunday School class week after week feeling so disgusted with him, she could barely keep from running out of the church. Kevin taught love and humility, but at home he was complaining, critical and cutting (the 3 Big, Bad C’s). They appeared to everyone at church as a happy couple, but their home was anything but.

Sandy was angry. And she felt she had every right to remain angry as long as he refused to change his habits. Sandy’s expectation was that Kevin should treat her lovingly and be concerned about her needs. And she felt she had every right to demand he meet her expectation. While it is true that Kevin OUGHT TO be a loving husband, Sandy was making herself miserable by believing her anger was all his fault. She was not dealing with the truth.

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## What did you expect (cont')

Her expectations led to “poor me” feelings because she repeatedly told herself lies like “It’s terrible to have a husband like Kevin. It’s impossible to be happy with Kevin as he is. I can’t stand it any longer.” She reacted to this Thot-Talk with anger and manipulation. She showed her disgust to Kevin in every way she could think of. She said and did things she knew were hurtful and punishing. But she believed she was completely justified, because Kevin was just not measuring up to her expectations of him.

With God’s help and encouragement from a close friend, Sandy began to face reality...the truth based on God’s Word. She knew she had to get rid of the old tape of lies she had believed for eight years. She began to change her Thot-Talk to the truth: “Kevin is my husband. And although I would rather he act differently, I can still live with him without making constant demands that only go unmet anyhow. I am no longer going to try to change him. It would be nice if he would change, but it is not essential for my personal happiness. I can live a satisfactory and happy life even if my husband does not treat me as I want him to. And even if he never

changes, God can give me the grace to treat him with love instead of disgust.”

Her new Thot-Talk began to make a difference in her anger and in her punishing behavior toward Kevin. As she cooperated with the Holy Spirit’s work in her life, He slowly uprooted the bitterness which had grown inside her for so long. And then she started to see a difference in Kevin, who had felt her disapproval so strongly and for such a long time, that he had taken every opportunity to show her she had bad traits of her own. They had played the “One Up” game for years. Sandy’s change in Thot-Talk broke the cruel and vicious cycle they had gotten themselves into.

The constant repeating of “Poor me” thot-talk is what created and perpetuated Sandy’s anger and resentment. “Poor me” thoughts really do have the power to make us suffer, don’t they? But did you notice that when Sandy began believing and meditating on the **truth** evaluated by God’s Word, she found peace and emotional health and joy. This is why God commands us in Philippians 4:8 — *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such*

*things*. He commands us to think about the good characteristics of our mate. We, however, in our “poor me” thot-talk, often think about whatever is *not* true about our mate, whatever is *not* noble, whatever is wrong, whatever is unlovely, and so on. What a difference believing the truth of God’s Word, and then living out that truth makes in our relationships! Just look at what happened in Sandy and Kevin’s marriage.

We must watch our thot-talk. If something even resembles “poor me,” stop and confess this is not what God wants for you. Let it be a **red flag**, that you are headed for misery. Then face reality, evaluate it by God’s Word to make sure that what you have hold of is truly **reality** and not just your perception of it. Then, as you believe the **truth**, live in the **freedom** to focus on your mate, praising God that you are no longer in bondage to your own self absorption. And then experience the **joy** of the Holy Spirit’s fruit in your life.

We’ve barely scratched the surface on expectations and reality. There is much more to delve into. So we will continue next time with more about the subject and some practical solutions that really work.

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