



iMarriage 1 – *Keeping My “I” on You* {Andy Stanley}

INTRODUCTION

Marriage. Everybody’s is different. Every marriage contains a unique blend of personalities, a unique history, a unique set of circumstances, a unique set of problems, and a unique set of joys. Despite the fact that every marriage is different, there are certain aspects of marriage that affect us all in the same way. There are some universal constants wired into us as people and into the nature of relationships. One of these universals is the power of expectations. As we’ll see in this session, understanding how expectations work will have a huge effect on the relationship between you and your spouse.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have the following affected your expectations going into marriage? With each, have you tried to copy or avoid this picture of marriage?
 - a. What you have seen on TV
 - b. What you have read in books or magazines
 - c. What you have seen in other homes
 - d. What it was like in your home
2. Have you ever felt like you just couldn’t measure up—that you just couldn’t meet the expectations you felt were placed upon you? Maybe this occurred with your parents, your spouse, your boss or someone else. How did this affect the relationship?
3. When expectations collide, which of the following reactions describes you?
 - a. You leave (you distance yourself from your spouse)
 - b. You conquer (you try to change your spouse)
 - c. You conform (you try to be like your spouse)
 - d. You compromise (you try to work it out so that you both “win”)
4. What are the downsides to each of these reactions?
5. We tend to think of compromise as the best of these approaches; however, compromise stems from a commitment to marriage rather than a commitment to our partner. Compromise is really another way to be committed to “I” because I want MY MARRIAGE to work out. Have you seen this dynamic in your marriage?
6. Expectations create a Debt/Debtor relationship in marriage. It becomes about what your spouse “owes” you. What do you feel like your spouse owes you?



7. Expectations begin as desires—desires that God put in us. We were all born with desires for respect, admiration, companionship, acceptance, intimacy, sex and love, among others. It is when we turn desires into expectations that we begin to turn our marriage from a covenant relationship to a contract relationship. Do you currently feel like you view your marriage as a contract between two parties or a covenant between two committed people?
8. Are you guilty of either of these symptoms of shifting desires to expectations? Explain.
 - a. A lack of expressing gratitude—you complain about something not getting done but rarely thank your spouse when it does get done.
 - b. A lack of acts of service—you see something that needs to be done and do nothing about it is because you expect someone else to do it.

THINK ABOUT IT

Meditate on the following verses this week: 1 Peter 3:1-2 and 3:7; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Ephesians 5:33. How do these apply to your marriage?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

The first step in transforming your expectations is to identify them. This week identify your current expectations for marriage. What do you feel like your spouse owes you?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.” 1 Peter 3:1-2

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” 1 Peter 3:7



OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER/HOMEWORK

To start the group off you could have each group member pick out one or two of these and talk about your expectations going into marriage compared with your current experience. This is not the place to embarrass your spouse, but to laugh together at our flawed expectations. Or, couples can talk through these by themselves during the week.

- A. How are household responsibilities taken care of?
 - a. Cooking
 - b. Cleaning
 - c. Taking care of the kids
 - d. Laundry
 - e. Yard work
 - f. Home repairs
 - g. Car maintenance
 - h. Taking out the trash
- B. How do you expect decisions will get made?
 - a. I make the call
 - b. They make the call
 - c. We'll decide everything together
 - d. We'll consult on the big ones
- C. Marriage is supposed to be...
 - a. Exciting, spontaneous
 - b. Comforting, planned
- D. Conflict in marriage will be handled by
 - a. Stuffing it all inside
 - b. Letting it all hang out
- E. When arriving home from work
 - a. We'll talk about the day
 - b. We'll give each other space to unwind
- F. Holidays will be spent
 - a. His family
 - b. Her family
 - c. Alternating between
 - d. Just us
- G. The garage will be
 - a. A place for parking our cars
 - b. An attached storage building
- H. Evening meals will consist of
 - a. Home cooking
 - b. Take out
 - c. Go out
 - d. Fend for yourself
- I. Bedtime attire will be
 - a. As little as possible
 - b. As comfortable as possible
- J. We'll have sex
 - a. Twice a day
 - b. Twice a week
 - c. Twice a month
 - d. Twice a year
- K. We'll handle our money
 - a. By saving most of it
 - b. By spending most of it
- L. We'll have
 - a. No kids
 - b. One kid
 - c. Two kids
 - d. Twelve kids
- M. We'll vacation at
 - a. Six Flags
 - b. St. Simon
 - c. St. Croix
 - d. Vacation?