

Expectations

Sermon October 3, 2021

Scripture reading: 2 Peter 1:1-11, Ephesians 4:1-6

Golden verse: *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* Ephesians 4:2

Dear beloved, in the next five Sundays (except Thanksgiving, Reformation Sunday and Remembrance Day), we will analyze some major tips, which apply to all kinds of relationships such as friendships, work and family relationships, and romantic partnerships. Healthy relationships increase our happiness, improve health, and reduce stress. People with healthy relationships have more happiness and less stress. There are basic ways to make relationships healthy, even though each relationship is different.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us that that the most powerful force in the world is a relationship. He was an effective builder of relationships. He made building unbreakable bonds with a few men the core of His strategy. Just hours before the crucifixion, Peter insisted emphatically, saying: *“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”* (Mark 14:31) When he was hanging on the cross, He started a conversation with the other crucified. Let’s see together today what our Lord Jesus Christ says to us about relationships and the power of relationships. Let us see a few ways we can build healthy relationships.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus gave us His new commandment: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:34-35)

Before we go further, let us think about four questions:

1. What is the best relationship you’ve ever had, and why?
2. Why is loving one another such a big deal?
3. What grade would you give yourself in your most important relationships?
4. Where would it be wise to put some more effort into your relationships, and what might you do?

The illusion of perfection

There are some jokes about how women impose unrealistic standards on men, or how men are just grown-up children. Often, the expectations couples place on their relationship define how they relate to each other, and influence their happiness.

In all kinds of relationships, such as friendships, work and family relationships, and marital partnerships, we tend to expect other people to be perfect and to do everything in a perfect way. We want people to be as we want them to be. We often hear or say: "I wish that..." And this way we build the image of the ideal child, friend, or partner: "I wish that you were..." As the next step, we form our specific requirements: "If you want to make me happy, you have to do this and this and this for me." We know exactly what we want from a relationship, but often we forget what we should do for a healthy relationship. With other words, we know clearly our expectations, but we forget about our obligations. We know what we want to ask for, but do we remember what we should offer?

It would be very important to realize that sometimes we raise unrealistic expectations from each other, and this is why we are not totally happy with our children, family members, or friends.

Our expectations from each other must always be anchored in reality. For this, we should re-visit and re-think our expectations, and maybe to expect less.

People who are called "happy people" and can find their happiness in many things, often have a better quality of life than those who make their partner responsible for their own happiness. It is dangerous to assign to our children, partner, or friends their roles and our expectations from them. That would cause us tons of unnecessary frustration.

In order to avoid suffering caused by our high standards, we should lower our expectations. This would protect us from disappointment because we cannot always get what we expect. We have to take seriously that there is no such thing as a perfect child, friend or spouse who can perfectly satisfy our needs.

It is very important to create appropriate expectations, then to be open and flexible about our expectations. Also, we have to communicate our expectations. These will help us to stay in reality and will help our friend, child or partner to develop their ability based on our expectations.

If we would like to summarize what we should expect from each other from a good enough relationship, which would not be too much expectation, we can say:

- to be treated with gentleness, compassion, respect;
- to receive love and affection
- to not be humiliated, neglected or abused
- to not be deceived
- to be valued

What qualifies as unrealistic expectations?

Expecting your partner to be jump for you every time you need something, setting the bar of standard too high, wanting to do everything together, and the desire that your partner will fulfill all your needs and demands at the detriment of his/her well-being are some examples of unrealistic expectations.

Keep your expectations realistic in a relationship:

- be confident about what you need;
- remember that expecting too much can hurt your status in the relationship;
- don't expect others to be like you; and
- don't expect perfection everywhere.

Your expectations will not ruin your relationship with your family members, children, spouse, or friends AS LONG as you keep your expectations realistic and don't set the bar unreasonably high.

Honesty, trust, respect, affection, loyalty, intimacy and personal space are some healthy expectations to inculcate in your relationship.

You have to communicate what you want from your relationship and then you have to work together to decide what is reasonable and what is not.

If you would not agree with your child, family member or friends about their expectation, which for you might seem unrealistic, you both have to try to find a middle ground where you both hold your ground on matters that are important to both of you and both of you have to compromise.

“In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” Matthew 7:12