

5 Faulty Expectations That Can Crush Your Parenting Dreams

Today's content is based on a message by Ben Markham, our church's youth minister. His wisdom and insights can help hurting parents whose children (teens or adults) make dangerous choices; who face troubling situations of all kinds. My journey as a mom hasn't turned out as I expected. Has yours?

In John 1:29-4, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus a hard question, "Are you the one who was to come?"

Didn't he know? John had endured a year or so in prison and now he was beginning to doubt. He was suffering. There was no end in sight. He'd heard about what his cousin Jesus was doing and his expectations weren't being met—the kingdom hadn't been restored to the Jews. They were still under Roman rule. Is this how things are supposed to be, Jesus—really? It wasn't what John thought would happen.

My journey as a parent hasn't been what I expected, either. Lord, you've allowed so much pain and suffering. I never thought this would happen to me ... I don't understand.

Sometimes we have faulty expectations of God that apply to our parenting. Here are five of the most common ones.

Five Faulty Expectations of God:

1. He'll keep his promises in *our* time frame.

His timing is never ours. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). We need to surrender control. That's often when God moves, though not always.

2. He won't give us more than we can handle.

This isn't what the Bible means when it says, "...he will not let you be tempted above what you can endure" (1 Cor. 10:13). God gives us more than we can handle all the time! But he will help us. We can grow to be comfortable knowing we can't cope with everything on our own. Our part is to trust and lean on our heavenly Father. With him, we can do what we never thought possible.

3. He'll make things fair and always do what's right for us.

Life isn't fair! That makes us angry. However, God gives us no guarantee of things working out like we want. Jesus guaranteed problems and unfairness, but he'd help us overcome. In him we can be victorious. 2 Cor. 2:14a says, "Now thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ."

4. He'll change our circumstances if we pray hard enough or have enough faith.

We need to trust that God is at work in us and in our circumstances. Things don't usually change until we've changed—until God's done with how He wants us to grow. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). When we are weak, then we are strong—in him. Don't be attached to an outcome. Be attached to God.

5. He'll keep us safe. Nothing bad will happen to us or those we love. (How I wish this were true.)

One day, Jesus sent his 12 disciples out to do the work he'd called them to do (Matt. 20:18). Eventually, 10 of them would die a martyr's death. Jesus never promised safety, but he *did* promise that nothing could ever separate us from his love or his presence (Rom. 8:38-39). And we're promised something else: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose

mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You: (Isa. 26:3). "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. ... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Divine Love Is a Suffering Love

When we're in pain, we begin to doubt like John did. Our memories become stunted. We lose sight of truth and develop spiritual amnesia. We need to remember what's true: who God is and what he's done. And we need to remember when we suffer, he suffers, too. He weeps with us (John 11:35). Our pain hurts his heart because divine love is a suffering love. Weary parent or grandparent, don't you forget it!

Prayer: Lord, help us remember these things the next time we doubt and don't understand Your ways. We want to keep trusting. Thank You that we do not suffer alone. In Your Son's name. Amen.

A book that might help you relate better to your prodigal child, offering real, practical hope is *Engaging Today's Prodigal: Clear Thinking, New Approaches, and Reasons for Hope* by Carol Barnier.

What faulty expectations did you have as a parent? How do you cope with the disappointment? We'd love to read your comments! {eoa}

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