

Text: Ephesians 5:21-33

Title: "But, You Owe Me"

Introduction: I think I speak for all of us who are married that we would like certain things out of our marriage and from our spouse. I think we all want to experience true intimacy and unconditional love. I think we all want to be loved for who we are and not what we can do for the other person. I think we all want to be respected and listened to and experience affection. We all want to be special to someone, right?!?

Well, last week we started to discover one of the reasons why we do not experience in our marriage relationships what we all hope for. For most of us, we went into marriage with certain dreams, wishes and desires (DWD). We have things that we thought would be because we have seen our parents married or another 'perfect' couple or we've seen great relationships on TV or in movies and we think that's what our marriage will look like. We go into marriage with dreams, wishes and desires about what our schedules will be like or our finances (who's going to make the money and how much) or our house or car will be like and how many kids we will have and when and what our spouse will wear to bed. And that's okay. We are supposed to have wishes and dreams.

The problem, we found out last week is when those wishes and dreams, subconsciously (most of us are totally unaware how or when this happens) turn into EXPECTATIONS that we heap on the one we love. The dynamic in a marriage changes completely when we go from dreaming together to asking the other person, "When?" "When are you going to do what you promised?" You said you would and I kind of said I do because you promised that you would and now I did and you haven't!

When we allow our DWDs to become EXPECTATIONS, we go from a loving, "Covenant" relationship where we are attempting to love each other unconditionally (AGAPE) to a DEBT/DEBTOR relationship where we say to each other, "YOU OWE ME!"

After all, you are my wife! After all, you are my husband! And that's what husbands do... Please understand that even in marriages that go this way, there are good times, but there is always that something hanging over your head that I still have to meet the bar and reach higher or they'd better reach higher and they aren't meeting the bar...

In DEBT/DEBTOR relationships there is no room for unconditional love and no room for "Expressions of Gratitude" and / or "Acts of Service". We become THANKLESS in a DEBT/DEBTOR relationship. "Why should I thank him/her? They are just doing what they are supposed to do! They are now up to par ... up to break-even ... up to ZERO! Why thank them?"

Again, when was the last time that you told your spouse clearly, "Thank you for making one of my dreams, wishes and desires come true"? Thanks for keeping the house clean or having dinner on or bringing home a paycheck that helps us put food on the table or working with the kids, etc. INSTEAD, we have expectations that our spouse SHOULD meet! Why thank them for doing something they SHOULD do?!?!?!?

Remember this again this week: It's easy to be you. Even if you are getting what you want out of the marriage, if your spouse has to be YOU to accomplish that, the crash is coming. Why? Because it is extremely stressful to be someone else...

Here's what I want you to do ... Imagine a marriage where all of the expectations that are on you or that you are placing on your spouse (BE LIKE ME! Think like me, act like me, reason like me, etc.) were placed back into the DWD box. Imagine you and your spouse peering into each other's DWD box and trying to figure out how to make the other's dreams come true... Imagine just being thankful for what we have and hoping for more without stressing the one we love...

Speaking of which, how many of you did the homework? "My Spouse Owes Me..." Once we know what our expectations are of our husband or wife, then we can be aware that I might want them to do all those things MY WAY or maybe I am not grateful when they do make one of my dreams come true, etc. Expectation = CLEAN DISHES ... will I nit-pick them if they do the dishes, but not the way I would have done them or will I be grateful for them being done (not PAR, not SHOULD)?

Imagine being in a marriage where you didn't have the burden or the pressure when you came home to live up to a standard. Imagine the burden of trying to be exactly who your spouse thinks you should be disappearing and being able to live and breathe freely in your home. Imagine... an EXPECTATION BOX that is EMPTY!

We are going to try to get there today.

LET'S PRAY!

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side of it you will see our scripture for today and on the other a brief outline of how we are going to continue to talk about marriage relationships. Please fill in the blanks and take this home and read it again. We are NOT going to read the whole Scripture, but you have it to read. Please also write down what means something to you... For those of you who are joining us via website or IPODING, welcome! You can download our program off of our website...

I. Christians Only

Now, introductory statement is this: The answer to the question that we are going to ask today only applies to those of you who are Christian. Right! I said that. If you are not a Christian today, we are thrilled that you are here and hope that even today's message will make you more comfortable about putting your faith in Jesus Christ and your whole life in God's hands. We are glad that you are here, it's just that the answer I have is going to make you maybe a little uncomfortable or you might push back a bit.

If you are not a Christian today, I just don't have an answer for you. When it comes to your marriage ... GOOD LUCK! I believe that God invented marriage between and man and a woman and marriage goes a whole lot better when God's involved! If you come to me and say that what we talked about last week is you and your spouse ... high expectation, very little joy or intimacy or gratitude or acts of service and you wanted my help; if you don't believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I'm not going to be much help! You are going to just have to figure it out...

Here's what I'm telling you today: The Bible tells us how to keep the EXPECTATION BOX empty. Really? Yep. Did you not find that part yet?!? The Bible teaches us how to keep our marriage focused on satisfying wishes and dreams and desires. Did you know that?

In order to empty the expectation box, we have to be able to answer the question, “What does my spouse owe me?” Here’s the answer: NOTHING! In a Christian marriage, we conclude that the one we marry forever and ever will forever and ever owe us NOTHING!

I know that you are ready to argue, but before you do, we are going to use our Scripture for today to defend that your spouse owes you NOTHING (Bible darts?! I know that scares some of you and you’re not sure how that works out, so I’m glad you are here today ... because that’s the answer in a Christian marriage. Your spouse owes you NOTHING!

The ONLY WAY to move our DWDs back to the DWD box from the EXPECTATION box is to decide that they don’t owe you anything!

Here is what is NOT the answer ... as a spouse, the marriage does not just become all about the other person (Sarah). The answer is that we invite a third party into our marriage (not a child). Listen to our Scripture... going to focus on three verses...

Paul was writing to the Church in Ephesus, but what we hear in these verses, Paul did not make up ... the same idea is throughout our Bibles. Ephesians 5:21 = Introductory statement on marriage, as Paul starts talking about marriage...

II. Submit to one another (v. 21)

- A. Submit = “I’m going to make your DWDs a priority over mine.” This means that Sarah’s DWDs are more important to ME than my DWDs.
- B. Listen to this; we don’t submit out of reverence for one another ... “Stan, submit to Sarah out of reverence for Sarah and vice versa” ... NO!
 1. If you are not a Christian, that’s what you have to do. Submit because of your love for that other person.
 2. If you are not a Christian, you will try to put each other first because you love the other person, but that’s very hard to do!
- C. But, Paul says that as Christians, we are to submit to each other out of REVERENCE (aaawwww ... ooooo ... whooooo = that’s reverence) for CHRIST your Savior! The Christ that came and died on a cross so that your sins can be forgiven and you can have a new life here and an eternity in God’s Paradise / Heaven. In light of what He’s done for you, I want you to submit to your spouse.
- D. This is powerful! It’s like me having a conversation with God. “God, thank you so much for sending your Son to die on a cross and loving me when I certainly don’t deserve it. Thanks God for forgiving me and offering me eternity in your Kingdom. Thanks that I’m not quite as bad of a jerk as I used to be and I see things in new ways and my life is changing and for filling me with compassion for other people. You have given me what I don’t deserve and haven’t given me what I do deserve. What can I do to show you how grateful I am for all that YOU have done for me?!?”
 1. Seriously? Yeah, I’m serious God. What can I do?

2. Take all of your passion and gratitude and all that love you have toward ME and I want you to shower it down on your WIFE!
3. Wait. No, this is between you and me God. You did something for me and I want to do something for you ... don't bring Sarah into this. Let me just express my gratitude to YOU!
4. I heard you and I want you take all that love and passion and emotion and gratitude and I want you to place it right there on your SPOUSE!
5. Can't I just give 11%? Can't I go on a mission trip?
6. Yes, but I really want you to show your gratitude to me by projecting it on your WIFE that I brought into your life!
7. God = I want you to submit to her and put her first, not because she has earned it or deserves it, but because I (God) have put you first!
8. God = I want you to do for her what I have done for you.
9. God = I want you to take this debt-free relationship that I offer you (your sins are paid for by MY Son coming to earth for YOU! Right God, that's the great thing about being a Christian ... I don't have to EARN my relationship with YOU!), and I want you to pass that on to your SPOUSE!
10. God = Just like I have declared that you don't owe me anything, I want you to declare that your wife doesn't owe you anything.

III. Wives, this means... (v. 22)

- A. Wives, submit to your husbands because THEY ARE GREAT! ... because they have earned it ... because they will never fail you ... because they have earned your trust ... because you have a guarantee that they will never hurt you.
- B. Nope. God is consistent. Submit to your husbands AS TO THE LORD!
- C. God, it's easy to submit to You. You have forgiven me and loved me when I was unlovable and you've never failed me, God. God, I will submit to you because I'm so grateful.
- D. God = Great! Take all that energy and that passion about submission and channel it to your HUSBAND!
- E. What? God? Have you seen him?!? "Yeah!" But he ... "it's not about he". "I want you, out of reverence (awe) for Me, to love him the way I love you."

IV. Husbands, this means... (v. 25)

- A. "Husbands, love your wives, just as they deserve to be loved." NO! Same thing...

1. Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church (Good Morning Church)! (That's you!)
 2. Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved YOU!
 - B. "...Christ loved the Church, and gave up his life for her."
 1. Guys, I want you to love your wife, not because of what she deserves or has earned or what she wears to bed ...
 2. Guys, love your wife in response to My love for you.
 3. Specifically, "BE WILLING TO LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR HER. Because I laid down my life for you!"
 4. That means that we have to learn how to make sure they know that we would lay down all the stuff that we think is important in exchange for what she thinks is important.
 5. Your wife needs to FEEL like that much of a priority!
 6. Why? Because she deserves it? NO!
 7. 2,000 years ago, God laid down all of God's priorities and out of love for us gave up what was most important to Him ... WOW GOD! How can I repay you?
 8. Go lay down your life for your wife!! That is the best act of gratitude you've got!
 - C. God = "I want you to take the debt-free relationship that you have with Me and apply it to your spouse!"
 - D. Wow God, that's asking a lot...
 1. "Yeah, but I died for you. If you want to show me gratitude, go home and channel your thanks into that man or woman that I put in your life ... (ready?) whether they deserve it or not – whether you feel like it or not – because that's what I did for you!"
 2. Get it?!?
- V. **God wants it tangible (real)**
- A. Do you know why God designed marriage like that? Because God wants so badly how much He loves you that it was not enough for God to just give you a good feeling now and then ...during a worship song or "I was looking at the clouds the other day and I know I saw an angel and I just know that God is with me..."
 - B. God wants desperately to be more than an invisible God out there somewhere that makes you feel good once every few months and you know God loves you.
 - C. God created marriage and there is a mystery in marriage (not that mystery). God loves Sarah so much and wants Sarah to feel that love in a tangible way so much that God put *me* in her life!
 - D. Marrieds, God loves your spouse so much and wants your spouse to know that God loves him/her so much that God put you in his/her life. ***You are the only legitimate and healthy source of Godly intimacy and affection and joy your spouse has.***

VI. **Spouse or Parent?** (Rope?)

- A. But Stan ... I'm happy for you and Sarah and I hope that all works for you, but you don't know my husband!
- B. Listen ya'll. I'm not naïve here. I have many couples and marrieds come into my office and it usually isn't to tell me how great things are going. I get it!
- C. But Stan ... If I don't make sure that he/she does this or that or keeps going in the right direction ... If I don't keep a list of expectations in front of them and keep prodding them toward those expectations, you have no idea where they will end up!
- D. Right! But if you keep him/her on a rope, guess what?? If you have a relationship where you teach your spouse what to do and how to do it and hang over them to make sure they do it the RIGHT way... Guess what you are doing?!? PARENTING!!
- E. If you are parenting your spouse, that is just another way to manage YOUR EXPECTATIONS! You are still in a DEBT/DEBTOR relationship and in a debt/debtor relationship there is no room for you to experience what God intended to happen in marriage!
 1. No room for unconditional love given or received.
 2. No room for Acts of Service or Expressions of Gratitude.
 3. No room for submission to one another.
 4. No room for joy and intimacy and happiness.
- F. You may keep your spouse on a leash and treat them like a child if you want, but you will continue to be disappointed in your relationship.
- G. But Stan, if I let go of the rope, he might or he might not or she could or I've tried that before ... I know! BUT, if you keep treating your spouse like a child you have NO CHANCE of having a marriage like God intended!

VII. There is no guarantee (release the rope)

- A. Here's the deal ya'll. There is no guarantee that your spouse will respond to the way you know you need to love them ... without expectations hanging over their heads ... with a box of desires that you hope they will pay attention to.
- B. I can't tell you that they won't take and take and take from you and never reciprocate. I can't. I wish I could give you all a guarantee that all of your DWDs will come true, but if I could guarantee that, then they would go back into the EXPECTATION BOX, right??!
- C. Oh, and there is no timeline on this one either. Well, I started treating them like a spouse on Monday and on Tuesday I peered into their DWD box and started working on a couple of them and Thursday rolled around and they haven't done ANYTHING! Oops! Expectations again...
- D. Remember as you love your spouse unconditionally, it's not because they deserve it, it's because God does!

Let's Pray!

Thanks to Andy Stanley's book and series "Imarriage" for outlines and insights for this part of the worship series.