

*WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? REDEEMING THE REALITIES OF MARRIAGE*  
By Paul David Tripp (Crossway Books: Illinois), 2010

Book review by Lisa Dorman, 2011.

It is easy to be surprised by our own expectations of our spouse. It is likely that you're able to think of friends, family and even your own marriage, where the expectations of what was going to be have not eventuated. As couples come to this realisation they then face the realities of making marriage work.

This book does not promise a silver bullet, brilliant cure or quick fix solution to the "perfect marriage". Instead, it offers truths about God and his transforming grace through the Gospel, intertwined with practical outworking of wise daily living. This book provides real hope for lasting change grounded in the framework of the Gospel.

Paul Tripp proposes that our marriages are not filled with the love that is grounded in the Bible, because of our sinful nature. He shows how our love of self continues to get in the way of loving God and one another, and the ways this can affect our marriage. However, the resolutions, wisdom and rescue are not presented as self-willed change, but rather as rest in God's powerful and transforming grace.

Following a comprehensive introduction which gently invites the reader to hold their marriage up to the mirror of the Bible and be hungry for a life that reflects God's reconciliation with his people and a better way for marriage, Tripp helpfully structures his book in great detail around six commitments for marriage.

1. We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness.
2. We will make growth and change our daily agenda.
3. We will work together to build a sturdy bond of trust.
4. We will commit to building a relationship of love.
5. We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.
6. We will work to protect our marriage.

There is a helpful and logical progression from commitment one to six that, taking the reader on a journey of thought, repentance and reconciliation (with an agenda for change). Each commitment delves deeper into the Biblical truths that bring God's wisdom to light, and includes examples from married life.

Tripp's use of rhetorical questions as sub headings help the reader examine their own life, however they don't leave you hanging with no answer on how to change. Even the title nudges you to think.

This book on marriage is different to any other I know and its strength lies in the author's ability to explain gospel truths in a way that makes a practical difference to marriage. It does not root a 'good marriage' in romance, or even narrow its explanations to well-known passages of scripture. Instead, the reader is encouraged to be humble before God and to see that a good marriage is about the people in it working hard to love Him more than themselves.

Living by God's grace and wisdom is what makes a marriage 'good'. It is the reader's task to take up the invitation to commit to marriages that confess, forgive, change, trust, love, show grace and protect the precious and gracious gift that God has given.

This book is a great tool to help strengthen and protect marriages. I recommend it to engaged couples, the recently married, as well as those who have been married for decades. Reading it with your spouse or fiancé would be most useful. It also provides a great foundation for helping those who are facing challenges in marriage.