

# Great Unmet Expectations: Avoiding Heartache on Valentine's Day

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Let me guess. You are a woman who *doesn't* look forward to Valentine's Day! Whether you are single and without a special someone in your life, or married and tired of being disappointed from unmet expectations on the "Day of Romance," you are not alone.

Surveys show that countless women feel frustrated every year and let down on February 14, primarily because of unmet expectations. Women look for expressions of love that will meet their preconceived romantic notions. And many times, even well-intentioned men can't possibly compete.

In a recent study of what makes married women happy, it was found that the biggest predictor of women's happiness is their husband's emotional engagement. The extent to which he is affectionate, to which he is empathetic, to which he is basically tuned into his wife was the most important factor in predicting the wife's happiness. The study also found "if the wife had to choose between having a husband who is taking half the housework and having a husband who is really making a conscious, deliberate effort to focus emotionally on his wife, the emotional focus is much more likely to be a paramount concern.

That speaks volumes of what women want and expect. And men, who tend to be more action-oriented in how they show their love (by helping with the chores, repairing the garage door, and bringing home a paycheck) can miss the mark with us when it comes to trying to express their affections on Valentine's Day, or any time, for that matter.

That said, fulfilling a woman's idea of romance is not something most men, in particular, specialize in. In fact, many men struggle with how to convey their feelings in a way that their

wives or girlfriends will understand and appreciate. And often times, what they think will impress you, doesn't. But what if this year you took the man in your life off the hook? What if this year you focused not on your expectations or the disappointment that the "Day of Romance" tends to bring, but on the Author of Romance, Himself, and what He's been trying to show you, day in and day out, about how cherished you are in *His* sight? In other words, what if this year you looked to *God* to meet your expectations first and then let the man in your life (if you have one) do what he can and see it as an added bonus?

For instance, look at the tender words God says, in His Word, to and about His people:

- **He calls you unforgettable:** "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! (Isaiah 49:15).
- **He says He has always loved you and always will:** "...I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness" (Jeremiah 31:3).
- **He calls Himself your Husband:** "For your Maker is your husband – the Lord Almighty is his name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit..." (Isaiah 54:5-6a).
- **He says His love for you is greater than anything you'll ever find on this earth:** "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And then Jesus did just that -- He laid down His life for you...one He calls "friend."
- **He promises He'll never leave you:** "...Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5b).
- **He assures you in His Word that He has chosen you as His own:** "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight..." (Ephesians 1:4).

- **He assures you in His Word that *nothing* will be able to separate you from His ever-pursuing love:** "... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

Reading verses like that, over and over, is like re-reading portions of a love letter that resonates with our hearts. And when our emotional tank is filled – by recognizing that we are valuable, loved and pursued in the sight of an all-knowing, all-loving God – we can then go through that day knowing we are loved whether there's a man in our lives or not. Or, we can receive whatever our husband or boyfriend has to offer as the “cherry on top.” Or, if nothing is offered us, we still know we are loved and we are more able and stable to deal with whatever does – or does not – come our way.

So go boldly into Valentine’s Day this year, my friend, and celebrate it because of how loved and cherished you are in the eyes of the Living God. And if you have a husband or boyfriend who makes an attempt that isn’t quite to your expectations, thank God for him and bless him anyway. Your “True Husband” will be watching!