

Great Expectations: An Interactive Guide to Your First Year of Marriage

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Toben Heim

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They'd been driving through Texas on their way to visit family and she'd mentioned she wanted to stop at the next Dairy Queen they passed. He kept driving. 'He doesn't love me anymore,' she thought.

Irrational thoughts like this too often accompany the trivial fights that newlyweds inevitably have. The Heims offer *Great Expectations* as a Christian guide for helping couples through eight issues that commonly surface in the first year of marriage.

Spirituality, sex, conflict resolution, and finances are matters that most couples know they will face. The Heims cover each of these, but also discuss some that might not be so obvious until after the vows are said: family histories, celebrations, communication styles, and community.

The bulk of each chapter consists of the Heims relating their own ways of handling these subjects, giving both his and her perspectives on each one. Often, a number of steps must be taken before a disagreement can be resolved. One argument the Heims had was over a baseboard that needed to be fixed. Joanne asked Toben to fix it, and when it wasn't done a few weeks later, she became upset with him. The first task was to define the problem: was it really just a loose baseboard or was there an underlying issue involved? Secondly, they identified how both of them contributed to the problem. They then sat down to brainstorm ways to avoid this kind of problem in the future. They agreed on a solution, tried it out, then came back together to discuss if it was working.

This openness about their own relationship's shortcomings as well as successes produces the feeling that the Heims are just friends discussing the problems everyone faces, and that no one is perfect.

Each chapter includes interviews with newlyweds, words of wisdom from marriage veterans, tips for dealing with each issue, questions to spark thought and conversation, journal pages for further introspection, pertinent Bible verses, and a resource list of other books on the subject. There is also a guide for using this book with a group of people to study together and create a supportive community.

These features create a guide that encourages couples to work together and openly communicate their feelings and expectations. Though *Great Expectations* is geared toward Christian couples, most newlyweds will encounter these eight basic issues and can benefit from the realistic and easy to understand information on how to keep them from being overwhelmed. This guide gives engaged and newly married couples a head start in avoiding serious conflicts.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (July / August 2000)

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