

The Expectation Evaluation

How to Tell the Difference Between Appropriate and Inappropriate Expectations

One of the greatest obstacles to living your one life well is the clutter of inappropriate expectations. Filling our hearts and schedules with tasks and emotional commitments that aren't to ours to manage can keep us from ever becoming the person God created us to be.

But the people in our lives have legitimate needs, and we're often called to help meet them. So how do we tell the difference between appropriate expectations that people have for us, the expectations that lead to the treasure of healthy relationship, and inappropriate expectations, the ones that are "plates of trash" (p. 40 *Exhale*) that need to be gently refused?

Here are **three questions** that can help you discern the difference between appropriate and inappropriate expectations and assess a current expectation:

- Does this fit what God has called me to do?
- Will I have to discard some of the activities I've already evaluated and committed to do?
- Will agreeing to this project set a precedent for more unsolicited assignments in the future?

Here are a couple of real-life examples:

Expectation #1: My mother asks me to help her for a day after my dad's surgery.

Does this fit what God has called me to do?

Absolutely! God has called me to honor my father and mother. They have always observed respectful boundaries and haven't been in the habit of over-expecting. Being part of my dad's care builds the treasure of deeper relationship with them.

Will I have to discard some of the activities I've already assessed and committed to do?

I'll have to adjust my schedule, but I'm still able to do all the things I've committed to do. Helping meet appropriate expectations isn't always convenient, but I don't want to leave others in the lurch.

Will agreeing to this project set a precedent for more unsolicited assignments in the future?

Yes, it might, but that's okay in this case. My parents are doing well but they're getting older. Again, because they've always respected my time, I'm not worried about this.

Conclusion: This is an appropriate expectation.

Expectation #2: I receive an email directing me to oversee a project.

Does this fit what God has called me to do?

No. The email was an unsolicited directive rather than a request, and it's a project outside of what I believe God has called me to do with my time. Also, it was sent to me as a volunteer from someone who isn't an authority in my life like a boss.

Will I have to discard some of the activities I've already assessed and committed to do?


Yes. I won't be able to complete my current commitments if I take on leadership of this project.

Will agreeing to this project set a precedent for more unsolicited assignments in the future?

Possibly, and that feels very unwelcome, especially because of the tone of the email which told me what to do rather than asking me.

Conclusion: This is an inappropriate expectation. This was a "plate of trash" that someone was trying to hand off to me instead of doing the job themselves. Happily in this case, I was able to offer to volunteer for a few hours rather than taking on leadership of the project.

Now, you try!



The expectation that's been given to me: _____

Does this fit what God has called me to do?

Will I have to discard some of the activities I've already assessed and committed to do?

Will agreeing to this project set a precedent for more unsolicited assignments in the future?

Circle one:

This is an appropriate expectation that will build the treasure of relationship in my life.

This is an inappropriate expectation that will clutter my life and distract me.