

**A Review of Paul David Tripp. *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage*.
Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.**

Jeremy Pierre

*Assistant Professor of Biblical Counseling
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky*

Anyone who appreciates Paul David Tripp's writing will be glad to hear that in this book, he applies his general approach to theology and life to the relationship of marriage. Tripp is frank about the reality that marriage is encumbered by both sin and human limitation ("What Did You Expect?"). He is also hopeful about the ability of Christ to redeem this reality ("Redeeming the Realities of Marriage"). The book presents a theological vision of marriage from Scripture framed by practical commitments for couples to consider for their own marriage.

Marriage is about worship before anything else. It is meant to provide companionship, bring joy, and generally benefit spouses. But these are benefits of—not the primary purpose for—marriage. Tripp grounds marriage in the worship of God by means of faith in Christ. As each spouse, by faith, is learning to obey the first great commandment of loving God, they are also learning to keep the second great commandment of loving the other as themselves.

Tripp frames this love for one another in six commitments that unpack the foundational themes of the book. These commitments are framed in the first person plural for easy transfer:

- We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness.
- We will make growth and change our daily agenda.
- We will work together to build a sturdy bond of trust.
- We will commit to building a relationship of love.

- We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.
- We will work to protect our marriage.

Tripp maintains well the awareness of human sin in relationship, without getting bogged down in a slough of relational despond. He never loses sight of the need for both spouses to work hard to maintain self-aware dependence on Christ for personal forgiveness and redemption. Both spouses need to pull weeds of sin and plant seeds of gospel. Both will need to maintain vigilance over their hearts for the protection of their marriage. Both must extend forgiveness daily.

And yet his approach is also able to recognize less egregious human foibles, calling for a gospel-awareness that deals patiently with both. His chapter dealing with differences in marriage was uniquely helpful for appreciating personality and gender differences without losing sight of the fundamental corruption of the heart as it functions in relationship. He does not get caught up in a lot of the silliness out there about "compatibility," yet he is also not simplistic in his presentation of relational dynamics between people whose internal responses to the world do not always match up.

I have found *What Did You Expect?* to be a helpful textbook in premarital as well as marriage counseling, when set alongside other books whose purpose is to focus more on expositing the biblical texts regarding marriage. Like *When Sinners Say 'I Do'* by Dave Harvey, this book serves well as either a reality check for glassy-eyed engaged couples or a hope-filled commiseration for weary spouses.