

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

# What did you Expect?

REDEEMING  
*the realities of*  
MARRIAGE



“Noël and I listened to most of this book driving in the car! Wise words. Authentic experience. Provocative application. Turned a long trip into a fruitful two-person marriage seminar.”

**John Piper**, Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Bethlehem Baptist Church,  
Twin Cities, Minnesota

“When Paul Tripp teaches, preaches, or writes he does so through the lens of the gospel. In *What Did You Expect?*, Paul faithfully and brilliantly lets the gospel bear its weight on the messiness and beauty of marriage. I, personally, found the book to be helpful, and we use it extensively at The Village.”

**Matt Chandler**, Lead Pastor, Teaching, The Village Church,  
Dallas, Texas

“The reason *What Did You Expect?* is so powerful is not because Paul Tripp is a marriage expert with tips and tricks to fix your problems, it’s because his teaching is drenched in the gospel and the Word of God. This honest book will help you see yourself and your spouse in a new light as it shows you who Jesus is and how to connect his redeeming grace to the daily realities of your marriage. Singles and engaged couples will benefit from it, too.”

**Joshua Harris**, Senior Pastor, Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg,  
Maryland

“Paul Tripp understands, like few others, how grace alone can transform your marriage. With great honesty and clarity, Paul makes the liberating point that when the only thing you have to offer your spouse is your acknowledged weaknesses and wimpishness, your realized faults and failures, and your recognized inabilities and incompetence, the grace of God shows up. And when grace reigns in a relationship, scorekeeping comes to an end and we become free from the slavish burden of having to fix one another. If you’re going to read one book on marriage, read this one.”

**Tullian Tchividjian**, Senior Pastor, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church,  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida; author, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*

“At once deeply theological and practically relevant, this is one of the top books on marriage I have ever read. Paul Tripp allows readers to examine marriage through a biblical lens so that we understand how God can graciously heal our hurting homes. As a pastor, I will implore our people to read this book as soon as it is available.”

**Chris Brauns**, author, *Unpacking Forgiveness*; Pastor, The Red Brick  
Church, Stillman Valley, Illinois

“What I’ve come to expect from Paul Tripp is consistently deep, transparent, biblical, wise, practical, gospel-driven counsel. Rather than muddying the water with self-focused strategies designed to meet our ever-multiplying needs, Paul, as the seasoned soul-physician he is, correctly diagnoses our problems and provides the cure—humble faith in Jesus Christ. I wasn’t disappointed. You won’t be either.”

**Elyse M. Fitzpatrick**, counselor; speaker; author, *Give Them Grace*

“Paul Tripp brings many years of counseling, growth as a husband, and deepening discovery of the liberating power of grace to this realistic and challenging guide to God’s engagement in redeeming marriages that are threatened by complacency, misunderstanding, and selfishness. The Bible’s message of the humbling and healing power of Christ’s mercy and the powerful presence of his Spirit in our homes comes through loud and clear. The daily practicality of gospel doctrine is made crystal clear by Tripp’s transparency about his personal missteps in becoming a Christ-reflecting husband and the many examples of couples who have discovered that they are sinners married to sinners. But that the third, divine Party in marriage gives hope and change when unrealistic expectations are shattered and when we confront our sin. But be warned: Tripp’s diagnostic questions are downright uncomfortable. Even those with strong marriages by God’s grace will find their deep tendencies toward self-coronation challenged!”

**Dennis E. Johnson**, Professor of Practical Theology, Westminster Seminary, California

“Paul Tripp issues a challenge for couples to roll up their sleeves, get to work, and do what it takes to build a God-honoring relationship. He presents six commitments for couples to make, and contained within each is insightful, practical, and effective advice on how to construct a loving, growing, grace-soaked marriage.”

**Mary A. Kassian**, Professor of Women’s Studies, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*

*What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage*

Copyright © 2010 by Paul David Tripp

Published by Crossway  
1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Cover design: Nate Salciccioli

Cover image: Benjamin Edwards, benjaminedwardsphotography.com

First printing 2010

Reprinted with new cover 2012

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission.

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ASV are from the American Standard Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from *The New American Standard Bible*®.

Copyright © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.

Scripture references marked NIV are from The Holy Bible: New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade Paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-3078-4

---

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tripp, Paul David, 1950–

What did you expect? : redeeming the realities of marriage / Paul David Tripp.

p. cm.

ISBN: 978-1-4335-1176-9 (hc)

1. Marriage—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV835.T75 2010

248.8'44—dc22

2009040500

---

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

LB 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12  
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# CONTENTS

Preface	11
1 What Did You Expect?	15
2 Reason to Continue	29
3 Whose Kingdom?	43
4 Day by Day	55
<b>COMMITMENT 1:</b> <i>We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness.</i>	
5 Coming Clean: Confession	71
6 Canceling Debts	85
<b>COMMITMENT 2:</b> <i>We will make growth and change our daily agenda.</i>	
7 Pulling Weeds	101
8 Planting Seeds	115
<b>COMMITMENT 3:</b> <i>We will work together to build a sturdy bond of trust.</i>	
9 Sticking Out Your Neck	133
10 Someone to Be Trusted	151
<b>COMMITMENT 4:</b> <i>We will commit to building a relationship of love.</i>	
11 All You Need Is Love	167
12 Ready, Willing, and Waiting	185
<b>COMMITMENT 5:</b> <i>We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.</i>	
13 Amazing Grace	205
14 Before Dark	219

**COMMITMENT 6:** *We will work to protect our marriage.*

15	Eyes Wide Open	233
16	On Your Knees	249
17	Worship, Work, and Grace	267





## PULLING WEEDS

**M**arriage really is just a long-term exercise in gardening. If you've done any gardening you know there simply aren't any shortcuts. When you drive by that house festooned with gorgeous flowers of a wide variety of colors and kind, tell yourself that what you are looking at is hard work. Gardens begin with hard work. Clearing the land isn't fun, but it's essential. Digging holes for the seeds isn't enjoyable, but it, too, is a necessary step. The work of regular watering and weeding is also a necessity. Pruning off wilted flowers and dead leaves is necessary for plant health, too.

Why is it that we don't expect our gardens to just grow by themselves—you know, from weedy land to lush garden—yet we expect our marriages to blossom beautifully without the daily work of pulling up weeds and planting seeds? I must confess that I just don't get it. I don't know why we think that the most comprehensive and long-term of all human relationships can stay alive and thrive without the same commitment we make to our gardens. Perhaps one of the fundamental sins that we all commit in our marriages is the sin of inattention.

Did you ever drive by that house (maybe it's yours) where the garden was planted by an impatient or lazy gardener? You can see some evidence of flower life, but the plants are not healthy, and the view is surely not pretty! I think there are many, many marriages just like that. They were not planted well, and they haven't been tended well since. Let me stop and ask you right here: is your marriage in some way a picture of neglect? Was it planted well? Has it been weeded and watered with regularity? Have you lacked the motivation to do the hard work of seeding and weeding and then stood back wondering why things don't look prettier?

## COMMITMENT 2

This chapter and the next are a call to take a gardener's approach to your marriage. You have to be committed to pulling out weeds and planting seeds, or you will simply not have the marriage that grace makes possible.

### WELCOME TO MY WEED GARDEN

I couldn't help thinking, "How could someone live like this?" Sam and Sarah always seemed to be in a rush and to be too busy. Maybe the biggest weakness in their marriage was impatience. They seemed to want too much too soon; they both worked long hours so that they could acquire all the things they had decided they needed in order to enjoy the "good life." Their impatience ("got to have it now") kept them too busy. Sam seemed too busy to "romance" Sarah. No, I don't mean extravagant vacations to exotic destinations or once-in-a-lifetime gifts. He didn't do the little things—a daily morning hug before leaving the house, a silly card with an "I love you" note, an unexpected dinner out, a "for no other reason than I love and appreciate you" bouquet of flowers, or actually saying, "I love you"—on a regular basis.

They had little time for real look-you-in-the-eye conversation. Sarah knew that little things were becoming big things that could grow into huge, destructive things and that she needed to talk about them, but there never seemed to be time. Oh, she would drop hints; she was good at dropping hints, but Sam wasn't good at picking them up. More and more Sarah saw Sam as preoccupied and clueless. More and more it seemed that the kind of conversation they needed to have wasn't going to happen anytime soon.

All this made for a minefield of little conflicts. No, not "get the missiles out of the silo, this is war" battles, where there is more angry noise than actual communication. Sarah and Sam seldom screamed; they didn't have time for things to escalate to that level. But, because they weren't talking and because their relationship lacked unity-motivating tenderness, they disagreed all the time. They knew when going into their marriage that they got up on different sides of the universe each morning. These differences had the potential to make their relationship exciting, engaging, and mutually growth-producing. It also meant that theirs was a relationship that would need constant weeding. Disagreeing

## *Pulling Weeds*

all the time made their life together complicated, discouraging, and exhausting, so they both developed habits of staying clear of conflict, which often meant staying clear of one another.

Their busyness constricted their shared spiritual life down to an hour and a half on Sunday morning. They didn't read or pray together. Conversations about matters of faith seldom came up. In fact, there was little Godward motion in the marriage at all. They almost never talked about the blessings and calling in their relationship with God. When spiritual things came up, the conversation was more institutional and schedule-oriented. They would look at their schedules and briefly discuss whether they could participate in an event or a ministry.

It was hard for them to make any long- or short-term plans with one another. There were some big decisions that they needed to think through together, but they never seemed to be able to find the time. There were decisions that needed to be made about Sarah's continuing to work and whether they were going to continue to live in their present house. Because they were not talking these things through with one another, they began to develop individual thoughts about them. As these differences began to seep out, discussing the important decisions became all the more distasteful.

As it always does, the distance and coldness in their relationship made its way into their sexual life. Going to bed at night wasn't typically done together, and when it was, it wasn't typically warm. They didn't end their day in a moment of tenderness or with expressions of love. In fact, going to bed was often quite silent. Sam would plop into bed, roll over, and begin to sleep, while Sarah was still sitting up reading. Or Sarah would close her eyes while Sam was still across the room writing Facebook responses.

Sex is not the fuel of a good relationship; it is the expression or fruit of one. So it is impossible not to drag the character and quality of the relationship into this moment of nakedness and vulnerability. Sam wasn't attracted to Sarah as he once was; she had become a distant friend. And when they had sex, Sarah battled with feelings of being used. As sex became more mechanical and unfulfilling, it became less frequent. Yet, their lack of good communication made it seem impossible to talk about this delicate topic.

## COMMITMENT 2

Sam and Sarah were not in a disastrous marriage, but they were in a very weedy one, and the weeds were about to choke the life out of the love that was once there. But don't be too hard on them. We agreed we are all "weedy" people who need to pull personal and relational weeds daily so that the flowers of love and grace may grow. Sinners (which, in case you forgot, all of us are) always drag their sin into their marriages. Weeds of thought, decision, desire, motivation, word, and action cannot be completely avoided this side of heaven, so pulling weeds is the necessary commitment of any good marriage.

### JEREMIAH AND YOUR MARRIAGE

God's words of commission to Jeremiah have a powerful and practical application to your commitment to a daily lifestyle of marriage reconciliation. Yes, I know that God's call to Jeremiah is individual and specific, since he was being called as one of God's prophets. It is not God's call to Jeremiah that is interesting and helpful; it is the content of the call. Embedded in God's words is a model for how real and lasting change takes place. It is wonderfully helpful for diagnosing and correcting your marriage in the places where both are needed.

The words are brief but beautifully and accurately descriptive: "See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). If change was to take place in Israel (and it was desperately needed), God is saying that this is how it will have to happen: pluck up and break down, plant and build. God is saying that change always has two sides to it: *destruction* and *construction*. Change is needed because there are things in you, or in your situation or relationship, that need to be uprooted or torn down, and if change is actually going to be change, there are new things that need to be planted or built in the place of what was uprooted and torn down.

For your marriage to be healthy, you must have *destructive* and *constructive* zeal. I know that this sounds funny, but for your marriage to be what it was designed to be, there are things that need to be destroyed. But, like the problem of weeds that keep jutting their heads out of once-clear ground, this destructive agenda cannot be a one-time commitment. In some way, there are things, little and big, in the way

## *Pulling Weeds*

of what our marriages should and could be. I am going to suggest what some of these may be, but it is important that you know that what I am giving you is a general, pump-priming list that you need to expand and apply to the specifics of your own marriage.

### *Selfishness*

Maybe it's a leap for the best cookie, a quick movement toward the best seat in the TV room, or controlling the flow of the conversation with friends. Perhaps it is pouting so you get to go to the restaurant you want, arguing too hard to make sure you win, or doing something nice, but making sure that the other notices. Maybe it's being too busy to be bothered, not volunteering to help, or taking offense too easily. Perhaps it's wanting the one who hurt you to hurt as well, presenting yourself as more spiritual than your spouse, or taking your good old time when you know the other is waiting. Maybe it's refusing to forget what you say you have forgiven, manipulating a bit to get your own way, or being less than candid because you just don't want to have the conversation. Perhaps it's being so busy taking care of yourself that you have little time to care for the other, wanting from him or her what you are unwilling to give in return or making more demands than concessions.

It really is there in all of us—selfishness—because it is the DNA of sin. Perhaps nothing is more destructive in marriage than this. Perhaps it is the root of all the dumb and nasty little things we do to one another. Maybe it is the reason we make those big, disastrous choices that have the potential to end marriages. Doesn't Genesis 3 point us in that direction? At the bottom of it all, what is wrong is that we want our own way, and, in wanting our own way, we want to be sovereign over our little worlds, making sure that what we want is exactly what we get.

All this is a horrible reversal of God's design, so it will never work. We were constructed as social beings, made to live in vertical communion with God and horizontal communion with one another. Nothing works in life (let alone in marriage) when the human community is comprised of a bunch of self-appointed little sovereigns seeking to set up their own little kingdoms. That way of living precludes relationships and guarantees war. The other-centeredness that we were designed for and that God uses to rescue us from us is the only way of living that

## COMMITMENT 2

makes us able to live with one another in respect, appreciation, and peace.

Selfishness is like liquid clay; it will shape itself to the contours of whatever vessel it is poured into. You and I aren't necessarily less selfish than other couples around us; we are differently selfish. Since none of us is sin-free, we all need to look for evidences of the DNA of selfishness shaping the way we think, desire, act, and respond in our marriages. This is a weed with a huge root system and the vitality to suck the life out of marriage.

But don't be discouraged or overwhelmed. As I said earlier, the cross was specifically designed to free us from our slavery to ourselves. Grace is a can opener. It alone has the power to free us from the vacuum-sealed can of our selfishness. So where are the weeds of selfishness in your marriage? How are you doing at finding them and pulling them?

### *Busyness*

There is no doubt about it: too many of us are trying to have hundred-dollar conversations in dime moments. Too many of us have left little time in our schedules for meaningful conversation, tender connection, and focused problem solving. Too many of us have little time for relational reflection and introspection in our marriages. Too many of us are doing marriage on the fly. Marriage, too often, is what we do in between all the other things we are doing that really determine the content and pace of our schedules. But marriage doesn't function very well as an in-between thing, and marriages surely don't tend to thrive when we leave them alone and ask them to grow on their own. A marriage that is going to grow, change, and become increasingly healthy needs cultivation. Like a garden, it doesn't do well when it is being neglected.

So, why are we so busy? There may be many answers to that question, but let me suggest one that is particularly true of Western culture. The answer may surprise you: *materialism*. I think we all have been influenced by the materialism of Western culture, which says that happiness and fulfillment are to be found in material things. If you are a Christian, you would say that is wrong and that you do not believe it. But that does not discount the fact that the influence is very powerful, and the evidences of its seduction are in all of our lives in some way.

## *Pulling Weeds*

The constant pursuit of bigger and better material things sucks away our time, energy, and relational vitality. We not only have to work way too much to acquire material things, but once we have them, we are enslaved to the responsibility to maintain them. And with all our acquiring, the things we have acquired don't satisfy the longings of our heart. So we go out and get more, as if we are running a race that has no finish line.

Many of us live in houses way bigger than we actually need. Many of us have closets that are stuffed with clothing we seldom wear. Many of us are spending way too much money on restaurants, entertainment systems, big vacations, and luxurious cars. And if that does not describe you, perhaps this will: almost all of us are living beyond our means in some way.

Again, because it is built on a lie (material things can make us happy), materialism can't and doesn't work. It leaves us empty, in debt, and addicted, while taking our time, attention, and energy away from the most important human relationship in all of life. I cannot tell you how many times I have had a husband or wife say to me, "I would love to do these things [things that keep a marriage healthy], but I simply do not have the time." Could it be that we work too much because we want too much, and we keep working and keep wanting because what we are looking to for satisfaction simply does not have the capacity to satisfy us? Meanwhile, the weeds continue to grow, and our marriages suffer as a result. Could it be that you are too busy? What keeps you too busy or too exhausted to address the struggles of your marriage and to do the good things that make your marriage grow?

### *Inattention*

Think of your physical body. Healthy people are healthy because they pay attention to their bodies. They pay attention to what they eat. They pay attention to signs of illness or disease. They pay attention to the need for regular exercise. They don't expect to be healthy without paying attention and responding to what they see and feel. I am deeply persuaded that many marriages get to an unhealthy place simply because they have been neglected. Sadly, many of us are better at responding to crisis than we are at working on prevention. We are all guilty, in some

## COMMITMENT 2

way, of taking our marriages for granted and, in so doing, taking one another for granted.

Here's how it tends to happen. Courtship is all about attention, because you are trying to win the other person. You pay careful attention to his or her likes and dislikes. You quickly learn what responsibilities he carries and what his schedule is like. You listen for the tone of her voice, and you examine the expression on her face. You study how he responds to various situations. You pay attention to what tends to upset her and what has the power to bring her joy. You learn where he needs support and encouragement. You learn what she finds comfortable and what she considers to be difficult. You become a student of his personality, tastes, politics, theology, family, history, and dreams for the future. You do all this because you are committed to know her and know her well, and you are committed to know her well because you want to win her.

Now, none of this is wrong in itself. True and lasting love is *knowing*; that is, it is a commitment to love another in ways that are specific to who he or she is and what God has called him or her to do. But it is very telling that this positive attention to the other and to the health of the relationship tends to wane once the person has been "won." This has more of the feel of a hunt than it does of a marriage. It is the sad dynamic of, "I don't have to pay attention to you anymore because I now have you." Sure, few people consciously say that to themselves, but it is the way many of us actually end up living with one another. We begin to relax too much and quit working as hard, so our marriage begins to suffer. There are not many couples fifteen years into marriage who would say that their relationship with one another is more understanding, more unified, and more loving, giving, and serving than it was when they first got married. Few would say that their marriage is more of a tender, intimate friendship than it has ever been. But many couples look back on courtship and wonder what happened. Remember: a healthy marriage is a healthy marriage because, by God's grace, the people in that marriage never stop working on it!

Is your marriage suffering from inattention? Have you become comfortable with taking one another for granted? Are you neglecting the work that is necessary to keep your relationship healthy?

## *Pulling Weeds*

### *Self-righteousness*

Do you welcome those moments when your husband or wife approaches you with a criticism or concern about something you said or did? Are you glad that God has placed you next to someone who helps you see yourself with greater accuracy? Do you embrace and act on the thought that you could be a better husband or a better wife? When you are approached with a criticism or concern, do you ever redirect the conversation, working to convince the other that you're not the only sinner in the room? Have you actually invited your spouse to confront you in places where he or she thinks it is needed? Do you ever blame your words or behavior on your husband or wife? When you feel a twinge of guilt, do you work to relieve your guilt by self-atoning arguments for the rightness of what you said or did? How active is your "inner lawyer," internally arguing in your defense, even as the other person is speaking? Have you tended to think that all the weeds in your marriage were brought in by your spouse?

I was there—self-righteous—but I did not know it. I was an angry man, but I simply did not see myself with anything approaching accuracy. In fact, I was quite hurt when Luella would characterize me as angry, and I was quite convinced that she was a discontented wife. Once (and this is humbling to admit) I actually said to her, "Ninety-five percent of the women in our church would love to be married to a man like me!" Can you believe it? I was convinced of my own righteousness and, therefore, convinced of my innocence. Oh, by the way: Luella very sweetly informed me that she was in the five percent!

What about you? Has self-righteousness kept you from weeding your marriage? Have you failed to keep the soil of your marriage clean, so that good things may grow, because you don't think you have any weeds? What thoughts, desires, motives, goals, choices, words, or actions need to be uprooted if your marriage is ever going to experience what God's grace makes possible to experience?

### *Fear*

You and I are probably more motivated by fear than we think. Fear is most often not an experience of trembling dread. It is most often not an experience of hand-wringing anxiety. Fear is most often a way of look-

## COMMITMENT 2

ing at your world that shapes the thoughts of your heart and, because it does, structures the way you respond. Perhaps your struggle is with the *fear of failure*. Perhaps you spend too much time thinking about the “what ifs.” Perhaps you are all too skilled at conceiving the bad things that may result if this or that happens. Perhaps you have spent so much time meditating on and preparing yourself for potential difficulties that you unwittingly fulfill your own prophecies. Maybe you are not actually responding to your spouse based on what he is doing but on what you are afraid he might do.

Or maybe, for you, it’s the struggle with *fear of man*. Perhaps you’ve attached too much of your inner sense of well-being, your security, and your hope to your husband or your wife. Maybe you are all too skilled at riding the daily roller coaster of his responses to you. Perhaps you work too hard to read his emotions. Perhaps what he thinks simply means too much to you. Maybe she is too able to make or break your day. Perhaps you work too hard to please her. Maybe her affirmation means more to you than it should.

I am persuaded that fear of man is a huge issue in the struggles of many marriages. I think that many of us are trying to get from our husband or wife what we will only ever receive from God—peace. Desires for acceptance and respect are not wrong in and of themselves. These desires remind us that God designed us to be social beings. We were made to live in community. Yet, it must be said that although the desire for acceptance and respect is not wrong, it must not rule our hearts. When these desires rule our hearts, they cause us to turn our husband or wife into our personal messiah, something that never results in good things in our marriages.

Is fear a weed that needs to be pulled out in your marriage? Is there a way in which your husband or wife has become your replacement messiah? Are you so afraid of failure that it keeps you from doing with courage the things God has called you to do in your marriage? Do the “what ifs” keep you from living in your marriage with joy in the here and now?

### *Laziness*

It’s hard to admit, but laziness is a big issue in our marriages. We know that we shouldn’t go to bed angry, but it seems that it will take too long

## *Pulling Weeds*

to solve our conflict. We know that we need to clear up this morning's misunderstanding, but it won't leave us much time to relax before bed. We know that we are not on the same page financially, but working it through simply isn't very exciting. We know we need to discuss what is happening in our sexual relationship, but we simply don't want to face the uncomfortable nature of that conversation. You know that you are bitter, but there just doesn't seem to be time in your schedule to examine and confess it. You know that things are not right, but you tell yourself you should wait for a better moment. You walk away from an argument, and you know you should go back and ask for forgiveness, but you don't know what you will get into if you do.

It's a fact: laziness is rooted in self-love. It is the ability to take ourselves off the hook. It is the willingness to permit ourselves not to do things we know we should do. It is believing that good things should come our way without our having to work to get them. It is opting for what is comfortable for ourselves rather than what is best for our spouse. Laziness is always self-focused and self-excusing. Laziness is undisciplined and unmotivated. Laziness permits us to be passive when decisive and loving action is needed. Laziness allows us to avoid when we should be engaged. Laziness expects more from others than we require from ourselves. Laziness demands good things without being willing to invest in them. I am persuaded that laziness is a much bigger deal in our marriages than we have tended to think. Check out these proverbs.

I passed by the field of a sluggard,  
by the vineyard of a man lacking sense,  
and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns;  
the ground was covered with nettles  
and its stone wall was broken down. (Prov. 24:30-31)

Isn't this exactly what we have been describing? Your marriage is inflicted with difficulty because you have failed to act to keep it what God intended it to be.

The desire of the sluggard kills him,  
for his hands refuse to labor. (Prov. 21:25)

## COMMITMENT 2

Often, marriages are troubled by discontent and unfulfilled desire. Proverbs connects these to laziness. Because you are not doing the hard work of following the command principles of God's Word, the good desires that you have for your marriage remain unfulfilled. This heightens your discontent, adding more trouble to your marriage and making it even harder to deal with the things you must deal with for your marriage to be what God designed it to be.

The sluggard will not plow by reason of the winter;  
Therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.  
(Prov. 20:4 ASV)

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!  
I shall be killed in the streets!" (Prov. 22:13)

These proverbs capture the excuse dynamic of laziness. We take ourselves off the hook by giving ourselves plausible reasons (excuses) for our inactivity.

The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns,  
but the path of the upright is a level highway. (Prov. 15:19)

Where does laziness in marriage lead? It leads to disappointment, discouragement, discontentment, and future trouble. In a fallen world, very few things are corrected by inaction.

So, what about you? What about your marriage? When was the last time you looked for weeds? When was the last time you and your spouse sat down together and took an honest look at your life together? Are you paying the price in your marriage for neglecting the first step of good relational gardening? Have your unity, love, and understanding been choked by the weeds of selfishness, busyness, inattention, self-righteousness, fear, laziness, or something else that has gotten in the way? You don't have to be afraid of examining your marriage, no matter how weedy it may be, because God meets you in your difficulty with his amazing grace. He blesses you with the grace of wisdom, patience, strength, and forgiveness. If you are God's children, it is never just you and your spouse, somehow hoping that you can work your way through

### *Pulling Weeds*

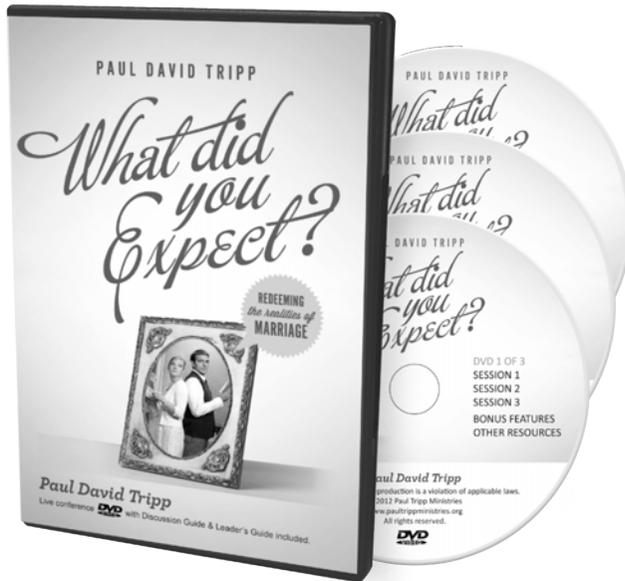
your problems. No, there is a third Person who inhabits every situation and location of your marriage. He is with you, he is willing, and he is able to come to your aid. In fact, in his grace, he has made you the place where he lives. Perhaps for too long you have let the weeds of sin choke the life out of your marriage. How about standing up and beginning to pull out the weeds? How about believing that, as you do, he will give you just the grace you need at just the moment you need it?



NOW AVAILABLE ON DVD OR CD

## A companion resource to ***What Did You Expect?***

*Great for small groups, Sunday school classes, and individual couples, whether you're marriage veterans, recent newlyweds, or even simply contemplating marriage.*



It won't take long for you to realize that your marriage hasn't escaped the reality of sin. It's what you do next that will make all the difference in the character and quality of your marriage. In this DVD/CD resource, Paul David Tripp is consistently faithful to both doctrinal precision and practical application.

- Recorded live on 3 DVDs in ten 25-minute sessions.
- The DVD set includes a reproducible Discussion Guide and Leader's Guide available on a separate CD.
- An audio version is also available on 4CDs.

**PAUL TRIPP**  
MINISTRIES, INC

[www.paultrippministries.org](http://www.paultrippministries.org) | (800) 551-6595

*"Connecting the transforming power of Jesus Christ to everyday life."*

*Somehow, somehow, every marriage becomes a struggle.*



Everyone's marriage morphs into something they didn't intend it to be. At some point you need something sturdier than romance. You need something deeper than shared interests and mutual attraction. You need changed expectations, you need radical commitments, and, most importantly, you need grace.

"Noël and I listened to most of this book driving in the car! Wise words. Authentic experience. Provocative application. It turned a long trip into a fruitful, two-person marriage seminar."

**JOHN PIPER**, Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Twin Cities, Minnesota

"This honest book will help you see yourself and your spouse in a new light as it shows you who Jesus is and how to connect his redeeming grace to the daily realities of your marriage. Singles and engaged couples will benefit from it too."

**JOSHUA HARRIS**, Senior Pastor, Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland; author, *Dug Down Deep*

"Paul Tripp faithfully and brilliantly lets the gospel bear its weight on the messiness and beauty of marriage. I found the book to be personally helpful, and we use it extensively at The Village."

**MATT CHANDLER**, Lead Pastor, Teaching, The Village Church, Dallas, Texas; author, *The Explicit Gospel*

"Deep, transparent, biblical, wise, practical, gospel-driven counsel. Rather than muddying the water with self-focused strategies designed to meet our ever-multiplying needs, Paul, as the seasoned soul-physician he is, correctly diagnoses our problems and provides the cure."

**ELYSE FITZPATRICK**, counselor; speaker; author, *Give Them Grace* and *Comforts from the Cross*

"When grace reigns in a relationship, scorekeeping comes to an end and we become free from the slavish burden of having to fix one another. If you're going to read one book on marriage, read this one."

**TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN**, Senior Pastor, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

**PAUL DAVID TRIPP** is the president of Paul Tripp Ministries and executive director of the Center for Pastoral Life and Care in Fort Worth, Texas. He has taught at respected institutions worldwide and has written numerous books on Christian living including *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, *War of Words*, *Broken Down House*, and *Whiter Than Snow*. Paul has been married for over forty years to Luella, and they have four grown children. For more information and resources visit [www.paultrippministries.org](http://www.paultrippministries.org).



CHRISTIAN LIVING / MARRIAGE

**CROSSWAY**  
www.crossway.org