


# LIVE FREE

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Exceed Your Highest Expectations

DeVon Franklin

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## **THE DANGERS OF EXPECTATIONS**

## CHAPTER 1 **Expectation Examinations**

It's time to identify the expectations that are shaping your life and decide if you agree with them or not. It's the first step in learning how to properly set a few carefully chosen expectations and to let go of all of the rest. Each chapter will close with a handful of these examinations, related to the topics discussed in the chapter.

Clear out some time and space where you can be alone. Designate a journal for this purpose or pull up your digital notepad on your smartphone. Prepare to be honest.

1. What are your top five *personal* expectations of yourself? Once you have listed them, organize them in order of significance or weight, from most to least important.
  2. Now that you have made your list, go through it, and ask yourself:
    - Which expectations came from me?
    - Which expectations came from outside of me—from my family, my community, my church, my school, or a group with which I identify?
    - Are there any items on my list that I don't really agree with?
    - Are some of these expectations unrealistic?
    - Why am I afraid to let go of the expectations I don't agree with, or the ones I now see are unrealistic?
  3. When have you projected onto others? Why did you want other people to think or behave in this way? Was it fair of you? Can you release your expectations of them now?
  4. Have you been putting others' happiness before your own? If you could stop worrying about what other people think and feel about you and your choices, what are five things you would stop doing? What are five things you would start doing?
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# 2

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## **THE SECRET SOFTWARE RUNNING YOUR LIFE**

## CHAPTER 2 **Expectation Examinations**

1. What are five beliefs you have about yourself, created by your secret software, that you know actually aren't true? What are five truer, more positive assessments of yourself?
  2. Are there ways in which you're acting out because you're suppressing feelings about unrealistic expectations—either those you have of yourself or others' expectations of you?
  3. Are you putting too much pressure on those around you?
  4. What are five areas where you could move away from the obvious expectations around success or accomplishment and take a more profound and rewarding path?
  5. When were five times you felt disappointed because your expectations, you now realize, were off? If your expectations had been more realistic, could those hurts have been avoided?
  6. When were five times you hoped people in your life would do something that they never did? What has stopped you from forgiving them? Can you do so now?
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# 3

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## **SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS**

## CHAPTER 3 **Expectation Examinations**

1. Take the list of personal expectations you made back in chapter 1 and do a “Joy v. Pain” assessment. Next to each expectation that brings you joy put a **J**, and next to the expectations that bring you pain put a **P**.
  2. How many expectations that you marked with a **P** can you release right now?
  3. If you can’t release an expectation, why not? If you know it’s something that’s important to another person, can you shift your POV so it’s no longer their expectation of you but your gift to them?
  4. If an expectation came from your parents, can you simply release it? Or are you feeling lingering resentment or pain about their expectation that you need to discuss with them before you can heal yourself and fully release the expectation?
  5. If you fear that releasing an expectation held by your family is going to cause them to be angry or even reject you, what support do you have in place to weather a transition to a place of being free to be yourself? Do you have a therapist, pastor, or trusted friend you can keep on speed dial?
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# 4

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**YOUR EXPECTATIONS ARE  
UNREALISTIC**

## CHAPTER 4 **Expectation Examinations**

1. Pick an expectation you want to set. Ask yourself if it's actually realistic. If it's not, is there a way to make it more realistic, so that it can be set? If you need to release it, what other expectation could you set for yourself instead that is realistic?
  2. List five areas where you know a physical expectation is unrealistic, but you still feel pressure to achieve it—such as whiter teeth, washboard abs, or an expensive outfit.
    - i. Next to each of these five items, write down what it would take to flip your expectation from unrealistic to realistic. Is this something you can afford or are willing to do?
    - ii. For any item you've deemed as unrealistic or unattainable, given your current circumstances, what will it take for you to release this expectation and be at peace with the reality of how you look, or with the best outcome you can possibly achieve?
  3. List three moments in your past when you were let down because something didn't happen as you wanted it to. Looking back, were your expectations realistic?
  4. List three moments in your past when someone in your life was severely disappointed in you. Were their expectations realistic? Looking back, could you have done something differently to better bridge the gap between what they expected and what you were willing or able to do?
  5. What is your biggest source of interpersonal stress right now? It could be stress between you and your spouse, your boss, a neighbor, a sibling—anyone close to you. Be really honest: Do you have unrealistic expectations about this person that are at the root of your frustration? What would be a more realistic expectation of this person's behavior or attitude?
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# 5

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**YOUR EXPECTATIONS MUST  
BE COMMUNICATED**

## CHAPTER 5 **Expectation Examinations**

1. What is one expectation you need to communicate with someone about before you can set it?
    - i. What is your plan for asking to have your expectation met?
    - ii. What will you do if the other person can't meet your expectation?
  2. If you were not able to set an expectation because you realized, after communicating it, that it was unrealistic, is there a way to negotiate with that person to make the expectation realistic? If not, is there another meaningful, related expectation that you could set instead?
  3. Do you need to adjust the way you communicate with those in your life, in order to be more positive and less critical?
  4. Before you agree to an expectation from your spouse or someone close to you, ask yourself:
    - Why am I agreeing to this expectation?
    - Who is it benefiting?
    - Is this in my heart to do?
    - What do I assume will happen if I say no, or try to renegotiate the expectation?
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# 6

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**DON'T DO IT FOR THE  
CULTURE, DO IT FOR YOURSELF**

## CHAPTER 6 **Expectation Examinations**

- 1.** What are the top five cultural expectations you feel pressure to meet? Once you have listed them, organize them in order of significance or weight, from most to least important.
  - 2.** Where do you feel the most cultural pressure? From your family, your friends, your racial or ethnic community, your church, your work colleagues? What do you fear will happen if you deviate from what's expected of you?
  - 3.** How comfortable do you feel being your authentic self on social media? If you can't be yourself there, what other outlets for free expression can you cultivate?
  - 4.** What cultural or spiritual beliefs do your parents hold that seem out of step with your current life? Would you prefer to honor these beliefs, to show respect for them, or to go your own way?
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## **FAITH: THE REAL SIXTH SENSE**

## CHAPTER 7 **Expectation Examinations**

1. What are the top five spiritual expectations you feel pressure to meet? Once you have listed them, organize them in order of significance or weight, from most to least important.
  2. If you were raised in a certain religion, do its teachings or practices still speak to you? If not, do any of your friends practice a religion that feels more meaningful?
  3. Have you ever tried talking to God? If not, why don't you try now? He's always there.
  4. Was there a time when you were disappointed but you can now see that God had a greater plan or blessing in store for you later in your story?
  5. Is there something you are expecting or hoping for that you could give over to God? What is your part in this process? What do you need to work on to make this happen?
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## **GET YOUR HOPE BACK**

## CHAPTER 8 **Expectation Examinations**

1. Is there an area of your life where you feel like you've lost hope?
    - i. Write down five possible outcomes, and then arrange them in order of likelihood. Be honest and realistic. Don't let your fear run the show.
    - ii. Even if the worst-case scenario happens, how bad would it really be? Is there anything you can do to avoid it?
  2. Is there something that's due to happen in your life that's causing you anxiety? Is there anything you could learn or do to better prepare yourself so you can feel more secure about the likely outcome?
  3. Are you allowing expectations about something negative that happened to you, either recently or in the past, to interfere with your ability to move forward in your life?
  4. Is there an area of your life where you've allowed your anxiety to override your hope? Can you move your perspective back to a place where, however nice a particular outcome would be, you're okay if it doesn't happen?
  5. If you had one central hope, not just for yourself but for your children, or the next generation, what would it be? What can you do to contribute to the likelihood of this hope being fulfilled?
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**IT'S NOT THEM, IT'S YOU**

## CHAPTER 9 **Expectation Examinations**

1. What are your top five relational expectations? Once you have listed them, organize them in order of significance or weight, from most to least important.
  2. What have you been blaming on your partner that you now see was really a problem created by your unset expectations?
  3. If you have been living in resentment within your marriage, can you forgive your spouse?
  4. If you could ask your spouse to make one change, what would it be? Is it a realistic request? If your expectation is realistic, set aside a time to have a conversation about it.
  5. If you have realized that you need to take serious steps to save your marriage, what's one thing you could do to move this process forward? For instance, could you look for a marriage counselor? Or write down the main expectations you need to communicate with your spouse about?
  6. If you have realized that you are in a relationship that is not really working for you and needs to end, what are the first three steps you need to take toward making this happen? What are three sources of caretaking you can put into place during this difficult time?
  7. If you have a friend who consistently disappoints your expectations, have you ever discussed your feelings with them? If your friend is unwilling to change, can you release your expectations, or would it be healthier for you to cultivate friendships with people who share your expectations?
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**SILENCE IS DEADLY**

## CHAPTER 10 **Expectation Examinations**

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1. What currently unset expectation do you need to communicate to your spouse?
    - i. What is your plan for asking to have your expectation met?
    - ii. What will you do if your spouse can't meet your expectation?
  2. Do you need to adjust the way you communicate with your spouse, or with others close to you, in order to be more responsive to the information they're giving you?
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# 11

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**THERE'S NO CURE FOR  
SINGLENES BECAUSE IT'S  
NOT A DISEASE**

## CHAPTER 11 **Expectation Examinations**

1. Why do you want to be married, and how do you think it will improve your life?
  2. Are there goals or interests you've put aside until you're married, like owning a house, traveling, or getting a pet? Is it possible that you could do these things on your own?
  3. If there is someone in your life putting pressure on you to get married, do you need to have a conversation with them and tell them that their expectations are unrealistic and unhelpful?
  4. What's one way you could be more present and enjoy your single life more today?
  5. Is there a conversation you've been avoiding, with someone you're dating, a friend, or a family member, in which you have to make a boundary or need clear to them?
    - i. How could you prepare yourself to have this conversation?
    - ii. What's the worst that could happen if it doesn't go the way that you'd hoped?
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**THE PROCESS IS THE RESULT**

## CHAPTER 12 **Expectation Examinations**

1. What are your top five professional expectations? Once you have listed them, organize them in order of significance or weight, from most to least important.
  2. Think about your career. How much of your dissatisfaction has more to do with where you were expecting you would be at this point than with the progress you've actually made?
  3. What are the top three items in your daily professional process that could use an upgrade? (Some examples might be going to bed earlier, eating better, or reading more about your field.)
  4. Are there any areas of your professional life where you've gotten what you expected but you're not satisfied? Is it possible that you're just falling back on the common definitions of success or fulfillment and that, if you dig deeper, you might find something more personal that you're craving—like more time, more freedom, more meaning?
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# 13

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## **FIX YOUR GOALS**

## CHAPTER 13 **Expectation Examinations**

1. What are the top three goals in your life right now? For each goal, ask yourself: Is this goal fake? Realistic? Or unrealistic?
  2. Are any of your goals based on external pressure from your family or any other source in your life? Is there a way to reframe the goal so it will be authentic to you, or should it be released?
  3. Are your goals realistic? If not, can you tweak them to be more realistic—for example, by extending the time frame in which you expect something to happen?
  4. Are there any goals you've been afraid to go for because you doubted you could make them happen? Is there a way you could bring a goal within reach, say, by taking a class?
  5. If you are working on a team, what are the collective goals you are pursuing? How could you revamp your teamwork to produce better results?
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**TO SUCCEED YOU MUST  
EXCEED**

## CHAPTER 14 **Expectation Examinations**

1. Is there an important conversation you need to have about what you can honestly expect from a situation and what is expected of you—whether it's with your boss or someone on your team at work?
    - i. Why have you been avoiding this talk? Are you pretty sure you're not going to receive the answer you want? Even so, remember that it's better to gain information—accurate information—from your boss or colleagues than to live in uncertainty.
    - ii. To prepare for this conversation, practice writing down the questions you need to ask the other person, to clarify the present reality and future possibility of that relationship.
  2. What is your biggest current source of interpersonal stress at work right now? It could be with your boss, with a colleague, or with anyone close to you on the job. Be really honest with yourself: Are your unrealistic expectations about this person at the root of your frustration? What would be a more realistic expectation of this person's behavior or attitude?
  3. Who is one person in your professional life—maybe your boss, your new sales prospect, or your most important client—whose perspective you would benefit from understanding better? What are you able to learn when you put yourself in their shoes?
  4. Can you be happy at your current job, or do you need to set yourself free for something new?
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## **FEEL YOUR FEELINGS**

## CHAPTER 15 **Expectation Examinations**

1. Can you find greater purpose at your current job, or do you need to move on?
  2. Is there another area of the company you work for that aligns better with your passions?
  3. Can you make a commitment to yourself that you will find a new, better job or position within a year?
  4. Is there a side hustle you could start that would give you an influx of money and joy?
  5. What three steps can you put into place today to start moving toward a deeper purpose?
  6. Can you free yourself of beliefs and goals that aren't yours, or that no longer serve you, in order to make healthier choices and become your best, truest self?
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