

Great Expectations

To end the last service we held in 2006, I led the entire congregation in a prayer of confession. Together we placed our complete trust in God (for everything) and declared openly that *nothing is impossible with Him*. And as we prepared our hearts for 2007, I felt strongly that both “faith” and “expectancy” would usher in the New Year. Today I am going to prove to you that there is a direct correlation between “faith” and “expectancy.” In fact, they complement each other through mutual reliance. And furthermore, they have equal power.

Whatever your expectations are for 2007, they will have a profound effect, not only on you but also on the people around you. What you confidently expect for this year, from both people and situations, will determine your attitude toward them more than any other factor. In **Psalm 62:5** the psalmist said this, ***“My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be moved.”***

Note if your expectations are from God you will not be moved because you see the best in every situation (and in every person). Consequently, they will reciprocate and give you their best in return. Your expectations have the power to produce off their own kind. This is known as the Law of Genesis. Therefore, good expectations produce good results, and bad expectations bring about bad results. So remember, whatever you expect, *with confidence*, becomes your own self-fulfilling prophecy.

This also applies to your relationship with God. What you expect from God will determine your attitude toward Him and also your faith in Him. If you confidently expect God to be doing great things on your behalf, great things will always happen to you. However, the Law of Expectations also works in the negative. If you expect negative things to happen, you are usually not disappointed. What you *expect* acts like a mirror in your life, whether positive or negative.

Dr. Robert Rosenthal of Harvard University conducted dozens of controlled experiments over the years to test the power of the expectations of teachers on student performance. In his landmark book, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, he tells of case after case where teachers were told that a student, or sometimes even a whole class, was extremely bright and was expected to make a quantum leap in academic performance in the coming year. The teacher’s expectations were primed.

Even though the students were chosen at random from the school population, as long as the teachers *believed* that these students were exceptional, and hence they expected them to do well, the students chosen performed vastly better than could have been predicted by previous grades and behaviour. Improbable but true.

In your own personal life, your expectations concerning your loved ones, your friends, work-mates and *even your own future*, all tend to come true. Your confident expectations exert a powerful influence on people and future events, for good or for ill so be very careful!

But why is this? How come our expectations exert such great power? The Oxford English Dictionary defines an *expectation* as simply, “*looking forward with hope or fear.*” It is positioned in the future and is “*regarding as very likely something to happen*” – either in the positive or the negative. From this we can see clearly that expectation, when positive, is directly related to *hope*. But when operating in the negative, it is connected to *fear* - fear of the future.

Therefore, your *expectations* can either create faith, or establish fear (which is the opposite of faith). Let me explain what I have discovered. **Hebrews 11:1** says, "***Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.***" But this could also read, "*Faith is the substance of things confidently expected.*" Likewise, "*Faith materialises (manifests) our favourable expectations.*" Therefore, "faith" in order to *produce* must have hope, and hope in the Greek means "favourable and confident expectation."

Notice, without "hope" (your favourable and confident expectation), *faith* is without substance, or, faith cannot "bring into being" what so ever your desire. Faith and hope complement and complete each other. This is the reason why "positive expectations" are so powerful!

On the other hand, fear (which is the opposite of faith) makes your negative expectations just as powerful. Fear of the future has the power to destroy your future. This is because you unknowingly clothe the future with destructive forces. What's more, the devil uses fear.

Quite simply, "faith" relies on a confident expectation that something good is about to happen, and "fear" relies on a confident expectation that something bad is about to happen! So if you want your expectations for 2007 to be positive and productive, make sure your attitude is right. And here are some suggestions:

[1] **Always expect the best from God.** Assume that the very best will transpire because God is in control of your future and He is at the helm at all times. He is the Captain of your life and the Author and finisher of your faith. God promises to do *exceedingly, abundantly, above all that you may ask or think*, so why not think of and expect the very best - He is able!

[2] **Expect the best from those around you.** Tell your family and friends that you believe in them, that you think they are wonderful, that you love them. But most of all, tell them that you are proud of them. Assume the very best will come out of every relationship you have, and I assure you, you will not be disappointed.

[3] **Expect the very best of yourself.** See yourself as God sees you. Imagine that you have unlimited potential because He has equipped you with great abilities. This means that "with God" you can and will accomplish anything that you put your mind to. Imagine that your future is limited only by the size of the vision you have for your life. Assume that your greatest moments lie ahead, and accept that everything that has happened to you up to now has merely been preparation for the great things that are yet to come.