

Making a Difference – The Power of Expectancy

The world around us is permeated with expectations. Each individual's expectations will have a profound effect, not only on themselves, but also on the people around them. What you confidently expect, from both people and situations, will determine your attitude toward them more than any other factor. Expectations have the power to produce of their own kind. This is known as the 'Law of Genesis' or the 'Law of Expectations'.

Essentially, good expectations produce good results and bad expectations bring about bad results. It's the intrinsic character of their source that determines the outcome. Therefore, whatever you expect with confidence becomes your own self-fulfilling prophecy. This also works in the negative. If you expect negative things to happen, you are usually not disappointed. What you confidently expect acts like a mirror in your life, whether positive or negative.

By being expectant you set yourself up to receive exactly what you are expecting. This is a very powerful principle because it can help you to make right choices even when you don't have every detail or resource available. As you exercise your faith and predict likely outcomes, you create real expectations about future events. And this approach motivates you to act positively, making this "expected" future come true.

Using an inspiring quotation from George Bernard Shaw's play, PYGMALION, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson concluded their 1968 publication, PYGMALION IN THE CLASSROOM. Just as the character, Eliza Doolittle, suggests that a person's place in society is largely a matter of how he or she is treated by others, the Rosenthal / Jacobson study concluded that students' intellectual development is largely a response to what teachers expect and how those expectations are communicated.

The original Pygmalion study involved giving teachers false information about the learning potential of certain students in grades one through six in a San Francisco elementary school. Teachers were told that these students had been tested and found to be on the brink of a period of rapid intellectual growth; in reality, the students had been selected at random. At the end of the experimental period, some of the targeted students – and particularly those in grades one and two - exhibited performance on IQ tests which was superior to the scores of other students of similar ability and superior to what would have been expected of the target students with no intervention.

These results led the researchers to claim that the inflated expectations teachers held for the target students (and, presumably, the teacher behaviours that accompanied those high expectations) actually caused the students to experience accelerated intellectual growth.

Whether you are inclined to accept or doubt the findings of the Pygmalion study and other research supporting "self-fulfilling prophecy" effects, it seems clear that the power of expectations can affect life's outcomes in one way or another.

So how is it that our expectations exert such great power? The Oxford English Dictionary defines an 'expectation' as simply, 'looking forward with hope or fear'. Note, it is positioned in the future and is 'regarding as very likely something to happen' (either positive or negative). From this we can clearly see that expectation, when positive, is directly related to hope. But when operating in the negative it is usually connected to fear (fear of the future).

Therefore, your expectations have the ability to create faith, or establish fear, which is the opposite of faith. **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 very essence of things confidently expected.”** It is faith that brings favourable expectations into being. Consequently, in order to ‘produce’, faith must have hope, and hope, in the ancient Greek means ‘a favourable and confident expectation.’ On the other hand, fear (which is the opposite of faith) can make your negative expectations just as effectual. Fear of the future has the power to destroy the future. This is because you unknowingly clothe the future with destructive energies. What’s more, evil forces will use fear to imprison you and make you timid and weak.

According to *Hebrews 11:1*, faith without hope has no substance; that is, faith void of hope cannot ‘bring into being’ those things you so desire. In this respect, faith and hope complement and complete each other. This is the reason why ‘positive expectations’ are so powerful! Quite simply, faith relies on a confident expectation that something good is about to happen; fear relies on a confident expectation that something bad is about to happen. So if you want your expectations for 2008 to be positive and effective, you must first make sure your approach is correct and that it lines up with God’s word.

Here are some practical 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. Remind yourself that he is the Captain of your life and the Author of your faith. In His word, God has promised to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that you may ask or think, so why not think exceptional thoughts and expect the very best results. The only limitations are those you place on your own imagination!
- (2) **Expect the best from those around you.** Tell your family and friends that you truly believe in them; that you think they are wonderful; and that you love them dearly. But most of all, constantly tell them that you are very proud of them. Praise raises expectations on both sides. Finally, assume the best will come out of every relationship, and I assure you that 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. Expect to succeed - nothing succeeds like success!

“Expectancy is the atmosphere for miracles.”

(Edwin Louis Cole - American Author)