

FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGIES - Saturday, August 29, 2015

While working in the human resources field in the mid-1970s I was introduced to a concept known as the Pygmalion Effect, which emphasized the importance of "expecting the best" from your employees. It was based on a psychological study conducted in 1971 by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, sometimes referred to as the Rosenthal Effect, which simply states a phenomena whereby higher expectations lead to an increase in performance. The Effect is originally named for the Greek mythological character Pygmalion, who fell in love with an ivory statue he had carved, which later comes to life. George Bernard Shaw took this story a step further in his play PYGMALION in 1913, followed by the film version of MY FAIR LADY in 1938 and the Lerner and Loewe musical version in 1956. For the past forty years I've kept a small name plate in my office that says "Expect the Best" and I truly believed in those days there was value in the reminder that having a positive attitude can really make a difference. I was not a follower of Christ at the time. Now, I can see even greater value by including knowledge of scripture to this ideology.

You see, our expectations for ourselves and others are quite frequently less than God's expectations for us. There's a lot of negativity in this world and the Evil One wants to tear us down and discourage us from reaching our true potential. I've always been an optimist and like to see the glass as half full rather than half empty! During my ten years of playing organized baseball from ages 12 to 22, I learned that getting three hits in every ten official at-bats was not bad at all and I became very good at fouling off pitches until I got a hit or at least walked. My actual On-base Percentage (OBP) was usually over .500. Of course, my main goal as a lead-off hitter was to simply get on base, since you can't score a run until you are on the base paths! Enough about baseball.

In my insurance sales career, I focused on appointments since I knew my closing ratio would allow me to be successful, if I simply saw enough people every week. Once again, I learned to expect the best and at this point in my career I picked up a great encourager on my team. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior around eight months into my new career. I've never been impressed by prosperity preaching, but I do know that God expects the best out of me in whatever I do. What I do advocate are Paul's words in Colossians 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward." Since 1998, I've coined the phrase "Here to Serve" and ended most of my written correspondence in that way. You see, I came to understand that God expects me to give my best to Him and to my clients. I'm here to first serve Him, but also to serve my clients. Having the right attitude and focus has made a tremendous difference in my career and after 32 years I now enjoy my profession even more than I did in the early years.

Since God certainly expects and wants our best in all we do, let's ask ourselves some tough questions. Are we giving our best in our professional lives? Are we giving our best to our families and loved ones? Are we giving our best in all we do and in all we are? Are we giving our best to God? He loved us so much that He sent His only Son into this world to die for us and save us from the penalty of sin. As Oswald Chambers so aptly stated, we certainly need to give "Our Utmost to His Highest!"

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Proverbs 10:5; 22:29; Galatians 6:9-10; Philippians 3:12-14; 4:8-9; 1 Peter 5:1-2

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Proverbs 10:5 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵ He who gathers in summer *is* a wise son;
He who sleeps in harvest *is* a son who causes shame.

Proverbs 22:29 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁹ Do you see a man *who* excels in his work?
He will stand before kings;
He will not stand before unknown *men*.

Galatians 6:9-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Philippians 3:12-14 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:8-9 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

1 Peter 5:2-4 New King James Version (NKJV)

² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.