

**WHEN JESUS LOOKS AT YOU
JOHN 1:42**

I. He Looks With a Double Optic in His Eye

- A. He saw Simon as he was.
- B. He saw Peter as he could be.

II. He Looks With a Divine Optimism in His Heart

- A. A realistic optimism.
- B. An idealistic optimism.
- C. Both idealistic and realistic optimism.

III. He Looks With a Definite Objective in His Mind

- A. An objective for the maturing of the man
- B. An objective for his mission in the Christian movement
- C. An objective for the multiplication of the man and his ministry

WHEN JESUS LOOKS AT YOU

(John 1:42)

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona. Thou shalt be called Cephas" (which is by interpretation, A stone).

Perhaps the most loved character in the Bible, apart from Jesus Himself, is Simon Peter. For sheer variety, for contradiction of personality, for mixture of saint and sinner in one person, the story of Simon Peter is unbeatable. Perhaps the reason we like him so well is because he is so much like us. When we read his story, we are looking at a full-length reflection of ourselves. Let's narrow the spotlight of our attention and let it fall on just one small part of his life—his *call* to become a Christian. It's of great interest to me to note the place of Andrew in Peter's conversion. Andrew is mentioned only three times in the New Testament (engaged in some activity), and on all three occasions he is bringing someone to Jesus. It was Andrew who brought the young boy to Jesus with his five loaves and two fishes for the feeding of the five thousand. It was Andrew who introduced the *Greeks* to Jesus (John 12) when Philip was uncertain. And it was Andrew who introduced his own brother, Simon, to Jesus.

Focus your attention for a few minutes on the words which Jesus spoke to Peter when they saw each other for the first time. "When Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." From this verse, we note how Jesus views men.

I. WITH A DOUBLE OPTIC IN HIS EYE

When Jesus looks at you, He always looks at you *with a Double Optic in His eye*. He sees "double" when He looks at you. When Jesus Christ looks at your life, He always looks at you with "double vision." He always looks at you "bifocally." He sees not *one* person, but *two*. When Jesus looked at Simon Peter in the moment of their first encounter, He saw *two* People.

First, He saw Simon as he was at that very moment. He saw *Simon*, the real man then existing. And what He saw was by no means a beautiful or pleasant picture. He saw a *cursing*, swearing fisherman. He saw the weak, unstable, undependable brother of Andrew. He saw a man of hot, rash, impulsive nature. Peter had undoubtedly thought a thousand times, thoughts similar to those expressed by the poet, Robert Burns, when he wrote, "Oh, that a man would arise in one, that the man that I am might cease to be."

But Jesus also saw something else when He looked at this man. *He not only saw the real man, Simon as he was, He saw Peter as he could be.* He saw the man that God's grace could make out of Simon. *And the two men—what Simon was and what he could be— were so different that each of them required a different name.* Looking at this man as he was, Jesus said, "Thou art *Simon*"; looking at him as he could *become*, He said, "Thou *shalt* be called Cephas, a Rock." *And every time Jesus Christ looks at a person, He sees not one person, but two.* He looked at *Simon* and saw *Peter*; He looked at *Saul* of Tarsus and saw *Paul* the Apostle; He

looked at *Jacob* the liar and cheat, and saw *Israel*, the prince with God. And when He looks at you or me, He sees two people -- the one I *am*, and the one He can *make* of me. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson, the famous poet, who put this truth into these poetic lines:

If in a vision you could see
Yourself as the person God meant;
You could never more be
The person you *are* content.

It is told that Michelangelo, the great Italian sculptor, seeing a rough and misshapen block of marble which had been cast aside as worthless and useless, seized a hammer and chisel and began to make chips of marble fly in all directions. A friend happened by and enquired what he was doing. His reply was: "I see an angel imprisoned in this block of stone, and I'm just working to let him out." By no fondest stretch of the wildest imagination could any one of us convincingly be called an angel, but at this very moment, Jesus Christ sees the person you could be (and what a great person he sees!) imprisoned in the hard, stony nature of what you are, and He is working at every moment, using His grace and power while preserving your freedom, to uncover and produce "the Possible You." And when He has finished, the ideal will have become the actual, the possible you will be the real you! What a plan! What patience and grace and power!

II. WITH A DIVINE OPTIMISM IN HIS HEART

When Jesus Christ looks at you, He looks at you *with a Divine Optimism in His heart*. During the days of His public ministry, Jesus was called "the friend of sinners." His enemies said, "This man receives sinners," and they meant it as a criticism. However, He regarded it was a compliment. He sought close relationships with all kinds of sinners. He cultivated their friendship, not simply because He thought they were worth saving, but because He believed they could be saved. He always looked at human lives with a radiant and invincible optimism. You may look at yourself as hopeless, but Jesus Christ does not. His thoughts, hopes, and plans for you reach as high as the stars.

Now, this optimism of Jesus is a realistic optimism. It is not blind-eyed, as much optimism of today is. It is not like the optimism of Voltaire's *Candide*, who closed his eyes to the awful facts of a sinful world and declared, "This is the best of all possible worlds." That opinion requires an exceptional amount of blind faith! The optimism of Jesus is not like that. The text says, "Jesus beheld him." It literally reads, "He looked into him," describing the gaze that sees the individuals through and through and reads his character like an open book. Jesus Christ sees you with a kind of "spiritual X-ray vision" (and realizes the full truth about your "X-rated" heart!). In John 2:25, the Bible says that "Jesus needed not anyone to testify to Him about man, for He knew what was in man." Nothing was (or is) hidden or secret from Him. All of man's inner sin and shame lay naked and open to His searching, penetrating gaze. No one knew so much about human nature as Jesus. He knew exactly the kind of man Peter was. When He said to him, "Thou art Simon," it is as if He had said, "I know all about you. I know full well the character associated with that name. I know all that people say about you, and much more besides. I know your reputation on the lake. I know about all your weaknesses. Thou art

Simon." But then, His glorious and superb optimism reveals itself. Knowing Simon as He does, He dares to add, "thou shalt be called Cephas, a Rock."

This optimism of Jesus is also an idealistic optimism. Could Jesus be anything less than idealistic, and still be Who He was? This unconquerable, idealistic optimism partially explains the secret of His redeeming power. It was this optimism that helped to redeem and save Simon. When Andrew brought him to Jesus, Simon was perhaps downcast and ready to despair. When Andrew said, "We have found the Messiah," Simon did not think the message concerned him much. If Jesus wanted disciples, it was surely steady, reliable men like Andrew that He wanted, and not weak, unstable men like himself, who would perhaps break down at the first attack of trial or trouble. But the first words Jesus spoke to him put new courage into his heart, new resolution into his soul, for they were words of glorious and splendid hope. "Thou art Simon... thou shalt be Peter!" At that moment, his redemption began. Doesn't our redemption always happen at this point, when we follow the gaze of Jesus, and look right through what we are to what He knows we can become?

This optimism of Jesus explains His ability to save many who seemed utterly beyond saving. He saved publicans and sinners because He first believed they could be saved. Jesus Christ never met a hopeless case. Never does the Bible record a single failure in His ministry. As an example, when Jesus faced Zacchaeus, the wicked tax collector, He said to him, "Thou art also a son of Abraham," and the little man could hardly believe his ears. Zacchaeus knew that he had sold his Jewish birthright, his spiritual heritage, by becoming a traitor to the hated Gentile Romans. Men had called him every name in the books - cheat, swindler, liar and thief, but no one had ever said things as this to him before. Lloyd C. Douglas describes what he thinks occurred when Jesus visited Zacchaeus. Jesus, carefully noting Zacchaeus' "moment of truth," says to him, "A great salvation has come to your house today." Then Jesus asks, "What did you see that made you desire this peace?" Zacchaeus replies, "Good Master, I saw mirrored in your eyes the face of the Zacchaeus I was meant to be."

And think of the boundless optimism He showed with regard to others. He found Mary Magdalene in her shame, and spoke to her a "thou shalt be" of forgiveness and purity. He found Levi in a hard, greedy profession, and spoke to him a "thou shalt be" of sainthood and service. He found Saul of Tarsus a blasphemer and a persecutor, and spoke to him a "thou shalt be" of grace and apostleship.

This optimism of Jesus is both idealistic and realistic because it is solidly based on the love, grace, and power of God. Jesus was optimistic about Simon because He knew what the grace of God could do in a human life when given a chance. In John 1:12, there was a verse that is often used for soul-winning, but seldom for any other purpose. The verse says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name." May I, for the moment, drop the last part of the verse, and thus show you a marvelous truth of God? "As many as receive Jesus Christ, to them He gives the power to become!" If ever we are to become what He wants us to be, we must have "power to become," and that power comes only when we "receive" Jesus Christ into the place of absolute, unreserved authority which He desires Christ into the place of absolute, unreserved authority which He

desires and deserves in our lives. May God give us grace to let Him be what He should be in us, that we might become what we should be in Him!

III. WITH A DEFINITE OBJECTIVE IN HIS MIND

Finally, Jesus Christ always views men *with a Definite Objective in His mind*. Is Christ's double vision worthless? Is the optimism of Jesus justified? Or is He "shooting for a star" too high to reach? Is there any reachable purpose in this? Yes, there is!

Christ's first object for Peter was an objective *for the maturing of the man* himself. That is, Jesus had an objective for his *person*. At this point, His objective is the same for each believer. He wants to make each believer like Himself! God wants you, dear Christian, to be like Jesus, both here and hereafter. God wants to "conform you to image of His Dear Son" (Romans 8:29).

Follow the history of Simon beginning at the moment described in the text, and you will find a fascinating progression. At first, he acted almost completely out of the "Simon nature," and seldom out of the "Cephas nature." Then, a while later, he shifted back and forth (like sand) between Simon and Cephas. And finally, after years of Jesus Christ culturing his life, he came to act almost completely like "Cephas" (the nature that Jesus Christ developed in him, making him rock-like) and almost never like Simon. And Jesus Christ can do the same for you. Give Him a daily commitment of your life—and watch!

Then Jesus had a definite objective in His mind about Peter's *mission in the Christian movement*, Peter's purpose in life. Jesus had a specific *purpose* for Peter to accomplish. Look at the mighty manner in which Jesus used Peter when he began to fulfill his Divine mission. Peter became the mighty preacher of the Day of Pentecost, and 3,000 (!) people were won to Christ. Peter became one of the two foremost leaders of the Apostles and the early church (Peter the Apostle to the Jews, and Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles). Peter became the writer of two of the great books of the New Testament (I and II Peter), books full of optimism, courage, faith and hope.

Finally, Jesus had a definite objective in His mind about a *ministry of multiplication* which He wanted Peter to perform. Jesus had a plan for Peter's spiritual *productivity*. Remember that His assignment to all of the disciples was "to turn people into disciples," and the mandate He gave and the model He provided both called for a ministry of massive multiplication through each disciple.

How was this plan fulfilled in Peter's life? Who was Peter's disciple? In answering this question, a solid New Testament case could be made for several individuals as Peter's disciples. Apparently, he set the great ministry of Barnabas, a remarkable disciple and disciple-maker, in motion on the Day of Pentecost and immediately thereafter. But Peter's primary disciple seems to have been John Mark, the man with a checkered history in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. Almost all Bible scholars today recognize that the main source for much of the material which Mark incorporated into his Gospel was the teaching he received from Simon Peter in their personal relationship. Simon Peter was an action-oriented person, and Mark's Gospel is an action book. Just a few minutes before writing these words, I came across this line in a

commentary on Mark's Gospel: "Mark traveled extensively with Peter as his traveling companion and interpreter." Peter himself called his disciple "Mark my son" (I Peter 5:13). New Testament scholar A. T. Robertson describes John Mark as "a protégé of Simon Peter." He also said that John Mark was "one of Peter's pupils, who as a young disciple must often have sat at his feet to be catechized and taught the way of the Lord." Robertson adds straightforwardly, "Behind John Mark and his Gospel stands the figure of Simon Peter."

Dr. Robertson further says, "It is clear that in Mark's Gospel we have reports that come from an eyewitness, and it is well-known that the eyewitness was the Apostle Peter. Mark has been willing and able to use Peter's eyes for us." Again, "In Mark's Gospel we are dealing primarily with Peter's interpretation of Christ after his reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is quite likely that Mark made notes of Peter's preaching from time to time, beginning at an early date, using this and other data for the final book which we possess."

When Peter was released from prison (Acts 12), the first place he thought to go to was "the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:12). Peter had spent many an hour in that same home through the years of John Mark's early life, and a discipler-disciple relationship had developed between them. Mark reveals his vocation of listening, learning, note-taking, and repeating what he was taught in the Gospel that bears his name. Thus, the life and Gospel of his disciple, John Mark, were some of God's chosen means for multiplying the ministry of Simon Peter.

Is there evidence of spiritual multiplication in John Mark's life? Yes, there is. He is described in Acts 13:5 and II Timothy 4:11 as a "helper." That word comes from a captivating Greek word, *huperetes*, which literally means an "under-rower." The "under-rower" kind of helper refers to a person who is willing to remain under the decks on board ship manning the oars while the captain of the ship gets the credit for its speed, determines its destination, and governs its movements. The purpose of the under-rower was to provide the means of transportation that would guarantee that *others would get to their destination*. The word refers to a person who was willing to help another person, willing to assist another person, willing to attend to the needs of another person. It describes a person who sees his relationship to others as that of service. No wonder that Paul said that Mark was "useful to me for service." Knowing what we know about Paul as a disciple-maker and Peter as one trained in the disciple-making process by Jesus Himself, we may be sure that John Mark was fully involved in helping others for the sake of spiritual multiplication—to multiply himself spiritually and to assist them to multiply through many generations. What a curriculum he used, if the Gospel of Mark is any indication! And Mark has certainly been multiplying Himself and the Christian movement through the centuries through that Gospel in the New Testament that bears his name.

It is obvious, then, that the bifocal vision and boundless optimism of Jesus were fully justified in the life of Simon Peter. But what about us? What about you? What about me? Jesus Christ looks at you today bifocally, and with the most blessed kind of optimism. He sees you the way you are— weak, uncertain, unfaithful, ashamed, guilty, prayerless. But He also sees you as gloriously triumphant, powerful, victorious as a Christian. Will you let His view of you be justified?

Margaret Slattery, in her book, Living Teachers, tells of a community in which a stranger came to settle and to practice law. He buried himself in his legal work, and when he was sometimes seen walking through the community in the evenings, he walked alone, with his head down, and with the look of mental distress upon his face. One day he was introduced to a new friend, a local artist. In confidence, he poured out his heart to him, revealing the deep, dark sin that stained his past and was destroying his peace. The artist said nothing, but parted from him and went into his studio. Weeks afterwards, the artist invited his melancholy friend to come in and view a portrait which he had finished, telling him that it was his masterpiece. The man was surprised and pleased that his judgment had been sought by the artist, but when he went into the studio to view the portrait, he was surprised to see that it was a portrait of himself, only now he stood erect and with his shoulders thrown back, and his head up, ambition, desire, and hope written on his face. The lawyer stared at the portrait in silence for a few moments, then with tears streaming down his face, he said, "If you see that in me, then I can see it in myself. If you think I can be that kind of man, then I can be; and what is more, I will be." When I follow the gaze of Jesus as He looks into me, and begin to realize what He sees in me, I want to echo those words: "Lord, if you can see that in me, then I can see it, too. If you believe I can be that kind of man, then I can be; and what is more, I will be by your grace and power.

I would like for you, the reader, to finish the sermon for me. Jesus Christ says, "Thou art _____." You fill in the blank; you know what you are. Be absolutely honest. Weak? Sinful? Guilty? Helpless? Fill in the blank! Then hear Jesus as He says, "Thou shalt be ." Only God Himself can fill in this blank. "Thou art, thou shalt be." The actual and the possible! The real and the ideal! What is and what is to be! And between these two stands the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Presence is like a mighty bridge flung across the great gulf that separates them. And when you daily surrender and leave the rest to Him, He will carry you across the chasm, and show the world what great things can come to pass! Dear Lord, let the *possible me* that *You* can see be the *actual me* that *everybody can see!*

AN ADDENDUM

“THE PYGMALION EFFECT”

The last time the Chicago Bears were in the NFL Super Bowl, the pre-game hype included the news story of a third-team bench warmer on the Bears team who supposedly sold the Bears' Super Bowl game plan play book to the opposing team, *supposedly* giving the opponents a great advantage on the playing field in the Super Bowl game. Christians have an Enemy, though he is hardly a bench warmer! Satan has time and time again stolen plays out of the Christian's "game plan play book," and has "sold them" to one opponent after another. Usually, when others run with our plays, the Christian community abandons the play and no longer uses it. So we have the insane situation of Christian enemies (usually cults or cultic religions) *using our plays, while the Christian community abandons them altogether!*

Let me mention *just one* of these plays. We could call this play the "Pygmalion Effect." This play has been stolen by Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the philosophers of secularism humanism, and the New Age philosophers. And the Christian community has largely abandoned it, even showing ignorance of this play as it is used in the Bible. This paper will explore and explain the "Pygmalion Effect."

George Bernard Shaw, the renowned British playwright and social philosopher, wrote a great play named Pygmalion. It was later made into a movie that became a gigantic box office success. The movie starred Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn, and it was entitled *My Fair Lady*. It is the story of an English gentleman, Mr. Higgins, who spots a beautiful but badly soiled street tramp named Liza Doolittle, and sees in Liza a lady who would do honor to a king's court. Of course, Mr. Higgins' "vision" is solely a matter of flattering faith on his part at the beginning of the story. The story line develops as Mr. Higgins enlists Liza Doolittle into a strenuous program of tutoring and training, a program designed to make of her what Mr. Higgins has envisioned her to be. And, wonder of wonders, she finally emerges as a first-class lady—all because of Mr. Higgins looking through *what she was* and seeing *what she could become*.

So what *is* the "Pygmalion Effect?" A man named Alson Gretha created the popular definition of it in these words: "*Treat a person as he **appears** to be, and you will only make him **worse**. But treat a person as if he already **were** what he potentially **could** be, and you will help to make him what he **should** be.*"

Andrew Carnegie stated the principle in a different way when he said, "*Men are developed the same way **gold** is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold, but one doesn't go into the mine looking for **dirt**. He goes *is* looking for **gold**.*" And it might be added that the gold is in the dirt to begin with only because of a long process of *heat* and *pressure*. Such processes are always present in the production of gold.

Popular literature, the arts, and cultic religion have been much more facile than the church in seeing and using the "Pygmalion Effect." For example, in another hit play and movie, *The Man of La Mancha* (the movie starred Peter O' Toole and Sophia Loren), this theme provided the plot. Based on Miguel Cervantes' classic novel, Don Quixote, the play tells the story of the mystical, idealistic, visionary Don Quixote, who meets in his crusading travels a small-town prostitute named Aldonza. However, because of his visionary idealism, Don Quixote refuses to see her as a prostitute. He sees her as a fine, pure, noble lady. He even conveys upon her the name, "Lady Dulcinea." The play is a fine presentation of the character-struggle within the

harlot as she cynically rejects his faith, then begins to erratically adapt her understanding to his faith, and at last takes *his faith as hers* and is able to *see herself as he has seen her all the time*. In the closing scene, the simplistic Don Quixote is on his deathbed, having spent his energies in his idealistic crusades. As he nears the end, the transformed Lady Dulcinea enters the room, nobly attired as a lady, and showing that her demeanor now matches this understanding. At first, in his semi-comatose state, he does not recognize her. She says gently, “Do you not recognize me, sire? *I am your lady Dulcinea.*” This is another example from the arts of the “Pygmalion Effect.”

A popular version of this principal may be seen in the child’s fantasy story of the handsome prince, the wicked witch, the ugly frog, and the beautiful maiden. The story is well-known. Once upon a time, there lived a handsome prince, who tragically came under the spell of a wicked witch. The witch placed a curse upon the prince and turned him into a low, ugly frog. The rule of the story is that he would remain an ugly frog unless a beautiful maiden kissed him. But it seemed to be an impossible situation, because beautiful maidens just do not go around kissing ugly frogs. However, the impossible happened! One day, a beautiful maiden spotted the ugly frog, had compassion on him, and planted a loving kiss on his ugly head. Instantly, there emerged from the ugly frog a prince even more handsome than he had originally been! And, as is usual in all good fantasy stories, the maiden and the prince fell deeply in love, married, and lived happily ever after!

This story is a theological parable. The handsome prince represents Adam as God made him. The wicked witch represents the devil, who brought Adam and the entire human race under the curse of sin, reducing him (them) into something lower and uglier than a frog. And man was destined to remain that way had not a Person with “the beauty of the Lord our God” upon Him come to the ugly frog, seen his real worth, and taken him into His love-embrace and planted the transforming kiss of grace upon him. The beautiful maiden in the story represents the lovely Lord Jesus Christ, who disregarded man’s ugliness in sin and embraced him in love and grace, kissing his sin and ugliness away on the Cross. The emerging prince is the saved sinner, restored to something more than Adam had been before he sinned. Then the romance of the ages began. The individual believer is “married unto Another” (Romans 7:4), even to Jesus. The bride is to grow in an ever-deepening love relationship with the Groom — *and they will live happily ever after!*

Satan’s junk may become the Savior’s jewels. The recycled garbage of human sinners will become Jesus’s greatest trophies of grace, to whom He will show His kindness forever (Ephesians 2:7).

Another popular version of the “Pygmalion Effect” is the fantasy story of *The Beauty and the Beast*. In the story, Beauty bends down to kiss the unlovable beast and transforms him into a prince. However, one of the main features of the story is in the fact that she did not wait until he *became a prince to love him*; indeed, it was *her love that turned him into a prince!*

In the book which introduces J. R. R. Tolkien’s epic trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, the book named The Hobbit, the noble wizard named Gandalf says to Bilbo Baggins, the hobbit/hero of the book: “*There is more to you than you know.*” This line plays a large part in turning Bilbo

into an over-achieving hero. Gandalf's faith and his practice of the "Pygmalion Effect" turns an unsung hobbit into a crusading champion of right. And the cause of right triumphs over evil because of *faith in a person's potential* instead of simply accepting the failures of his past.

In one of Lloyd Douglas' great novels, Jesus asks the transformed tax collector, Zacchaeus, this question, "What caused the change in you?" Zacchaeus responds with a personal testimony of the power of the "Pygmalion Effect" in his life. He says, "*Good Master, I saw mirrored in Your Eyes the face of the Zacchaeus I was meant to be! And I determined that if that's the man You see, then that's the man I will be!*" Christian author Walter Wangerin, Jr., said, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ showed me a new me hidden in the shadow of a sinner."

One of the greatest of the old mystical Methodists, Rufus Jones, said that his transformation as a Christian actually began one day when he had misbehaved terribly as a young boy. He expected a severe discipline from his parents. However, they didn't treat him as he anticipated at all. They went with him to his bedroom and gently asked him to get down on his knees with them. Then they prayed aloud. His mother concluded the prayer by saying, "O God, I ask you in the name of Jesus to make our son the boy and the man You intended him to be." Jones said, "That prayer pierced my heart as well as the heart of God, and my transformation began at that moment." The "Pygmalion Effect!"

Now let me recount a few modern testimonies which reveal the "Pygmalion Effect." Author and Christian leader Ron Hembree wrote, "Pastor/psychologist Dr. Richard Dobbins came into my life when I was a total failure. He said to me, 'Ron, I just want to be your friend.' Sometime later, he said, 'Ron, you're too good a man to be haunted by the past. Turn toward the future. *We need you!*'" What lectures, advice, and admonitions could not do, a gentle man with a warm and healing heart was able to accomplish. I owe him my ministry. He simply *said* — and *proved* — that *he wanted me.*" Dr. Dobbins placed faith in Ron Hembree's Christian future, and soon his faith began to become sight! The "thing hoped for," the "thing not seen," became solid substance (Hebrews 11:1).

In the early 1960s, a man brought his young, fat, short, slow son to a Jr. Hi football field in a small town in Alabama. The boy was marked by such timidity and inability that the rest of the players laughed at him. But his father took the coach out to supper, and said to him, "I want you to see in my boy an All-American football player, and then I want you to do everything possible to make out of him what you see. As strange as it may seem, I have already seen this possibility in my boy, and I will do my part to make it a reality." *Five years later, that boy was a High School All-American, and four years after that, he was a college All-American at the University of Alabama.* To complete the influence of the "Pygmalion Effect," that boy, whose name is Bill Battle, later became the University of Tennessee football coach.

Friends, isn't it time we took back the play that is *absolutely fundamental* in our "Christian play book," without which we will score few points and win few victories — isn't it time we took it back out the hands of the enemies of the Gospel, and began to "run the play" with regularity and efficiency in the Body of Christ and in our church communities?

Someone said, “People tend to rise to the level of other people’s expectations.” A Christian should be a clear reflector of *the expectations of Jesus — both in the dreams he holds for his own life, and in the hopes he holds for others. Jesus does not look at your failing past so much as he looks at your future potential. Jesus does not look for perfection in you so much as He looks for potential. Dear Christian friend, your potential is as vast as the Person of Christ!*

Supportive Quotes

Henry Ford said, “My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me.”

Cecil Myers wrote, *We are not mere human beings; we are human becomings.*”

There walks ahead of you (in your future) a far more Christ-like person than you have yet become.

James Moffatt translates a line in I Corinthians 13 in this manner: “Love is eager to believe the best.” It has been said that there are two types of people: *plus* people and *minus* people. Minus people always go around subtracting. If anything good is said about a person, they will find a negative punch line to throw in. In contrast, *Jesus always added new dimensions to life, new possibilities and new hope.* Someone said, “All of us work best in the sunshine of approval.” It was said of Jesus, “*In the company of sinners He dreamed of saints.*” So everywhere that Jesus went, He diminished the evil and developed the good.

Give Jesus the you that you *are*, and in time He will give back the you that you *ought to be*.

There are three persons in every individual: (1) The person whom his associates see; (2) The person whom he sees himself to be; and (3) The person whom Jesus sees. Everything depends on which “you” you center upon. If you are centering on the “you” your associates see, you will be in bondage to what others think about you. You will look around before you act to see what effect your action will have on others — you won’t act, you will react. You will become an echo and not a voice. If you center upon the “you” you know, then you will be discouraged. For who has not had some skeleton in his closet — things in his life that make his cheeks burn with shame and humiliation? But there is that other “you,” the one that Jesus sees. What a “you” that is! It is a “you” surrendered to God, co-operating with Him, taking His resources, working out life with Him. That “you” will do things beyond your personal capacity, amazing both yourself and others. Dare to tell Jesus today, “I would like to exchange *my* ‘me’ for *Thy* ‘me.’”

Illustrations for Reflection:

The Gold Mine.

Suppose you inherit a gold mine. You're overjoyed. You love that gold mine. You can hardly wait to get out there and get to work in it. But the first time you go out to inspect your treasure, the gold says, "How can you love me? I'm all dirty. I'm all mixed up with that awful iron ore, and I have that rotten clay all over me. I'm contaminated with bauxite and mineral deposits. I'm ugly and worthless."

"Oh, but I do love you," you say to the gold. "You see, I understand what you really are. I know you have all these imperfections, but I have plans for you. I am not going to leave you the way you are now. I'm going to purify you. I'm going to get rid of all that other stuff. I see your inherent worth. I know that the iron ore, the clay, and the mineral deposits are not part of the true you - you are just temporarily mixed up with them."

"I warn you, it won't be easy. You will go through a lot of heat and pressure. Left to yourself, you would remain in this dark place, buried in the dirty ore. But I know how to change you from what you are now to what you can be. I will make you beautiful, and you will make me rich."

Not Perfection, But Potential.

Jesus did not see the *perfection*, but He did see *potential* in them. As we seek to make disciples, we should also look for the potential in people. We must look beyond what a person *is* to see what he can *become*. No person should be cemented into his present character and conduct.

Some of the world's most glittering jewels do not shine when they are first discovered. They are only dull stones, and must be cut and ground before they glow with the colors of the rainbow.

See What Is and What Might Be.

We can all learn a lesson from the "four-eyed fish." These odd-looking creatures are native to the equatorial waters of the western Atlantic region. The technical name of this genus of fish is *anableps*, meaning "Those who look upward," because of their unusual eye structure. They have 2-tiered eyes. The upper eyes protrude above the surface of the water and enable the *anableps* to search for food and to spot enemies in the air. The lower eyes remain focused in the water, functioning in the usual fishlike fashion. They see in both worlds.

If we can develop eyes for seeing *what is* as well as *what might be*, we can help others dream.

Just Like Fishing.

Laura Bridgeman was a forlorn little girl who had been born blind, deaf, and dumb. It was Dr. Samuel Howe who took on the task of setting her free. Dr. Howe later said, "It was just like fishing. A man baits his hook, lets down his line, and tries again. For days and weeks I kept

telling my line down to Laura. For six months there was no sign of response. Then one day while I was dangling a new bait I felt a sudden tug. I pulled up the line, and Laura's soul came up into the light.”

SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRIES
Herb Hodges - Preacher/Teacher
3562 Marconi Cove - Memphis, TN 38118
901-362-1622 E-mail: herbslm@mindspring.com