

***Question: As a teacher, I see a lot of disheartened students with little sense of hope for their future.***

***I would like to encourage them. What would Jesus do?***

As the master teacher, Jesus had a different way of viewing people, a way that could help them see greater possibilities for themselves. Some people look at others and see only what they can selfishly get out of them. Others look at an individual, quickly pass judgment on him and never allow him to become anything different. But when Jesus looked at people, he saw the greater life that God intended for them. He then challenged them to become that something greater.

When he first met Simon Peter, “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John’” (John 1:42). By his intent look and knowledge of Simon’s parentage, Jesus indicated that he knew all about Simon. Simon was an impulsive, boastful and vacillating character; but this did not keep Jesus from seeing the possibilities of what Simon could become. Thus, Jesus gave him a new name. He said, “You will be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter)” (John 1:42). The name Cephas is Aramaic, the spoken language in Judea at that time. When translated, Cephas becomes Peter in the Greek language. The name Peter means “rock” in English. While the new name given to Simon may be understood as a prophecy of what he would become, I believe it was also a challenge and a word of hope and encouragement to become a new, stronger and better man. Jesus was telling Simon that he believed in what he could become.

In reaction to these words from Jesus, some of those standing around may have laughed to themselves and said, “This Jesus may be the Messiah, but he sure doesn’t know people, especially Simon.” If so, they would have failed to understand that by giving Simon a new name, Jesus was establishing a new relationship with him. Jesus was making a commitment to be with and to help Simon become a man of rock-like character. In the years that followed, this sometimes courageous and sometimes fearful man became a man of such rock-like faith that he courageously spoke for Jesus and died as a martyr for him.

We, too, need to learn how to look upon one another in the way Jesus looks upon us. He sees us not for what we are but for what God intended us to be and what we can become. With this view of people, we can

speaking words of hope and empowerment that give them a new name and hope for a better future. Jesus would challenge your disheartened students not to become locked into anyone's categorization but to see the possibilities for their future with the help of God and an encouraging teacher.

Jesus offers to every man, woman, boy or girl an opportunity to be born again (John 3:1-8) into a new life in God's kingdom where the possibilities are endless. No matter what our past failures, mistakes or sins, we can be forgiven and begin again with the help of Jesus Christ. He wants to give us new names like Chosen, Holy and Beloved. May we never allow anyone to hold us back from becoming what we can become!

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