

Do Your Expectations Line Up with God's?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released a bombshell January employment report which surprised everyone. Nonfarm payrolls increased 517K (185K expected, 260K previously). Private payrolls increased 443K (190K expected, 269K previously). Leisure and hospitality, professional and business services and health care led the job gains.

The January unemployment rate fell to 3.4% (3.6% expected, 3.5% previously) which was a 52-year low. Average weekly hours worked increased a near record 0.3 hours per week to 34.7 (34.3 expected, 34.4 previously). Average hourly earnings increased \$ to \$, an increase of 0.3% (0.3% expected, 0.4% previously). The percentage of the working age population in the labor force increased to 62.4% (62.3% previously).

The employment report underlines a strong and tight labor market. Currently, there are nearly two jobs for every person seeking employment. After the report's release, the market seems to be reevaluating its earlier forecast this year. The likelihood of a soft landing (in response to the Fed's policies) was increased by many. Realistic expectations would be more prudent.

Everything is not positive. The number of workers, who were working part-time for economic reasons, increased by 172,000 in January. Wages are still not keeping up with expectations. The tech sector is grabbing headlines as it terminates workers. Geopolitical and domestic political risks have increased. Energy prices are increasing. Inflation is falling but is still historically high. Good news is welcome, but caution should still be observed.

Expectations are important in leadership, business, politics,

sports, entertainment and relationships. High, but achievable, expectations motivate us and our team. Low expectations are demotivating and will usually result in subpar performance. Management and communication of expectations is critical for high-performance individuals and organizations.

Christians should have the highest expectations of any because our faith is in our King. We are careful to not have excessive faith in the economy, our wealth, our skills, a political party, or an earthly leader. Too much faith in anyone or anything other than God often leads to disappointment. In contrast, our King will never disappoint.

As followers of Christ, we have voluntarily substituted our limited abilities and perspective for His unlimited perspective, grace, power and love. We have been equipped with the Word which will never fail, and the empowerment of the Spirit of God which lives inside of us. Regardless of situations and circumstances which fill our lives, we can still overcome and bear fruit.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” (Gal. 2:20, NASB).

Too many Christians will place earthly limitations on our God. Outcomes which are totally unrealistic and even impossible in the natural are perfectly reasonable and easily achievable with God. Our expectations need to align with God and not with earthly limitations.

The Lord taught that everything is possible with God. If we follow Him, we will have a clear conscience, and will have all that we ask.

“For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37, NASB).

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence

before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22, NASB).

We need to have reasonable and realistic expectations, but with our focus on God. With Him, a slave who is falsely accused of sexual harassment against his master's wife, as Joseph was, can become leader of the most powerful country in the world at the time.

☒ With God, the slave Daniel can defy a king, be sentenced to death in a lion's den and live to become the king's trusted advisor. God can take a man (Gideon) who is afraid and hiding from an invasion, put him over an army of 300 men, and lead him to defeat an army of 135,000. God can also take a woman named Ester and save the entire Jewish race. The realism of our expectations depends upon God's promises and our relationship with Him.

We do not ignore earthly challenges, but our expectations must line up with the word of God. Hopeless situations become opportunities to glorify our King with His victory.

"And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him," (Mark 11:22-23, NASB).

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Dr. James Russell is a professor of economics at Oral Roberts University.