

# MONDAY MESSAGE

## FROM DR. MCFARLAND



### They can be more if we can see more

October 23, 2017

Recently I returned to Jasper for a brief visit and decided to do a little walking through the woods in Gilgal near my house. The weather was great, and this experience reminded me of walks I used to take with my daddy through the piney woods of my community. My dad was a barber in Jasper by trade, and his barbershop was one of the central meeting places in our small community. I spent many hours sitting and listening to men of all ages talk about life, their travels and all of the current events of the day. My world concept was developed while sitting in the barbershop as I was able to travel the world vicariously through the embellished experiences of the customers at McFarland's Barbershop.

Within the shop, my dad had a piece of cedar wood that we found on one of our Sunday afternoon walks. It almost looked like a live animal and was a key conversation piece. I remember the day we found it in the forest. We were walking and had just crossed a shallow creek behind my Uncle Irvin's house. My dad pointed out the cedar tree that recently had been struck by lightning. He told me to look at the root of the tree, and he asked me what did I see. I told him that it looked like a dying tree root. He then asked me to look again and use my imagination. He decided to walk ahead and told me to call out to him when I saw something different than just a root on a dying tree.



I remember staring at the root and trying to imagine something different than what I saw. Then along came a big lizard that caught my attention and distracted me from the root. Of course, like any country boy would do, I began to chase the lizard, and fortunately it got away. I returned to the root and looked for a second, and then I watched as the root began to take the form of a lizard. I mean, it was still a root, but I could see a lizard within the root. I called out to my dad. He came back to where I was, and I told him I saw a lizard. It was still a root, but I could see the formation of the lizard in the root. I showed him the head and the tail, the feet and even the stripes down the lizard's back. I realize now that this sounds kind of different, but I could see all of this within this root once I focused on seeing more than just the root. My dad said, 'That's my boy, I knew you could see more than just the dead cedar root.'

My dad was off on Mondays, so the next day while I was at school, he went back into the woods, cut the root off of the dead tree and took it into his shop. He carved the cedar root to more define the shape of a lizard. He shellacked it to bring the dead cedar alive, and somehow placed eyes on the cedar root in the appropriate location. When I was dropped off at shop from school the following Tuesday, I was amazed to see that the dead cedar root actually looked like a lizard. I was amazed. **I recognize now that my dad had a way of focusing not on what is, but on what is to come and on what could be.** I guess that I got that from my daddy.

As I think about the work that each of you are engaged in on a daily basis, **I encourage you to look deeper than what you see today from your students.** Reject the notion that our students' futures are bleak. You be the light that brightens their paths.

Look for the potential and to carve it out of the students so they can experience the opportunities that abound in the future. What do you see? Recognize that what you see today out of our students is only a small indication of what they can eventually become. If you can see it and are willing to act with intention, then they can be it. As we celebrate and expose students to college and career options throughout this week, I challenge each one of you to see your students as future college students, scholars and productive citizens. If we can see it, they can be it.

With something to think about, I'm Mike McFarland, encouraging you to look toward the future.

**Dr. Michael D. McFarland**  
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