

# Principal's Message

## What Does God See? A Prof X or a Voldemort?

At my first Chapel as the new Principal of ACSI, I shared a message about what God looks for in a person. It was a message as much for the school family as it was for me. I was new to the school and quickly realising its complexity and potential, wondered what to expect in the coming weeks and months – and more importantly whether I was up for the challenge.

Seven busy, blessed and bountiful years have so swiftly passed. In revisiting the message, I am learning anew the truth of God's word and experiencing what T.S. Eliot wrote in the *Four Quartets*:



*“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”*

Allow me to share the message in ECHO\*.  
God bless & take care.

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\*First shared at Chapel in ACSI on 27 June, 2011

Good morning! Members of the Board, colleagues, and young men and women of ACS(I).

When I first reported to the school last Tuesday, I was informed that my first task when school re-opened, was to address the school during chapel. Since that time, I have thought long and hard – about what to share this first time I am meeting the school.

To prepare for the message, I decided to ask those closest and dearest to me for advice.

My 18-year old daughter said, “Daddy, you must smile a lot. Your normal look is too fierce – and you might give a bad first impression.”

My 16-year old son – also had some advice. “Keep your message short – very short – and dress smartly.”

During the week, some friends came over – and shared with me some of the buzz on my appointment on twitter.

Apparently, someone – maybe one of you here – twittered about the new Principal vaguely resembling Professor X.

“Not bad,” I thought. But that thought lasted 5 seconds when I was told another tweet had compared me to Voldemort, from Harry Potter.

As I reflected on my children's advice and the twitter comments, it struck me just how much importance we human beings place on external appearances.

External appearances – the way a person looks, dresses, walks, smiles – seem very important in helping us assess or judge a person. This is not new at all.

In 1 Samuel 16, we read how God instructs Samuel to go to the home of Jesse to anoint one of his sons as King of Israel. The only problem is - God didn't say which son.

So Samuel goes to Jesse's home, sees Eliab – one of the sons – and thinks he is the one as he probably looked the part.

But God immediately checks him. In Verse 7, we read: **“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”**

I checked the word *heart* and found that the Bible has much to say about it. In fact, the word 'heart' in the New King James version of the Bible is found 835 times in 775 verses.

The heart of a person is therefore very important to God. When God sees you or me, he does not see us as short or tall, or by the colour of our skin or whether we have hair or moles on our faces, or whether our noses are long, small or absent altogether or whether we have smiles worthy of a toothpaste commercial.

He instead sees our heart. He looks at the full character of who we really are and potentially can be – how we think, feel, act, how we make decisions and how we relate to Him and to those around us. To God – our character – who we really are on the inside – is what matters most. And our whole life is a journey to become the persons God intended us to be.

Don't get me wrong – I am not suggesting we ignore totally our outer appearances. There is a place to be neat, tidy, presentable.

But our lifelong work – where we should spend time and effort on – should be on developing and growing to be the person God has planned for each of us, people with sound values and character. In Psalm 139, the psalmist says, **“Search me, O God, and know my heart.”** This first morning of Term 3, I invite each of us here to do the same – to ask the Lord to search our hearts – to show us areas where we have grown in – and areas we need to work on.

Our theme for this year – “In everything, set them an example” – is all about what is in our heart. So let's focus on what's there and how we can further refine it for God's use.