

The Power of Perspective

By Jerry Tobias

Being able to see well is vitally important, of course, because our sight enables our ability to respond to and function within the environment that surrounds us. Our perspective of life and life's challenges is also very important, as our "view" is what governs our beliefs, our attitudes, our responses and, consequently, how we live.

I am also convinced that there are two questions of perspective that must be determined before any others really matter. First, either "it's all about me," or "it's NOT all about me." This decision either enables or disables every relationship and every other part of life.

And, second, either "everything is terrible," or "yes, many things are bad, but I am still incredibly blessed." This latter perspective produces an attitude of thankfulness, peace and hope - in spite of, not because of, whatever may surround us or be ahead.



One problem with perspective is that our view is often incomplete. While we think that we have a total understanding of a situation, we may not see the "whole picture." That's why we need each other. And, that's why listening to those who don't agree with us is as important as listening to those who do. Our own view, while partially accurate, may be substantially incomplete.

Another issue is focus. Our focus defines our perspective, which then establishes our view (positive or negative) of life. Let me share a couple of examples.

When I was first diagnosed with cancer, my wife sought to find her "assignment" for this new journey. She was eventually convinced that it involved two things: remaining grateful, and staying interested in other people. As a result of her focus, she has a remarkably thankful attitude, a purposeful perspective, and has often been used to encourage many of the others that we've encountered along the way.

The second example occurred a few years back when I had the opportunity to fly a trip from the U.S. mainland to the island of Maui. My wife was also onboard this flight as a passenger. Just after we "coasted out" westward from California that day, however, the turbulence became significant and continuous. It was one of those days when there was just no smooth air to be found.

After we landed, I apologized to my wife for the uncomfortable ride. I will never forget her surprising response. She told me that all of the passengers were so excited about (focused on) going to Maui that she didn't think anyone had paid much attention to the turbulence.

I know what you're thinking. If you were headed to Hawaii, your focus wouldn't be a problem either. My point, though, is that focus does matter. Perspective matters. And, just as periodic eye exams are a good idea, an occasional evaluation of your perspectives is also a good idea. If adjustments are found to be needed - like when you get a new pair of glasses - the improvements will be so remarkable that you'll wonder why you waited so long. ■