



Perspective Change

All of us have perspectives on hundreds of subjects and myriad situations of life. We should cherish, even guard, the perspectives that are grounded in biblical truth. On the other hand, we should re-evaluate perspectives based on personal biases, feelings, self-oriented traditions, or common opinions and, instead, pursue a view toward change that aligns with biblical realities.

How do you know when you need to change a perspective? Sometimes, a statement that addresses a subject in a unique manner precipitates a change from a supposedly settled belief. For example:

- To the world I might be one person, but to one person I might be the world.
- A coincidence is when God performs a miracle . . . and decides to remain anonymous.
- I don't have to attend every argument that I'm invited to.
- Life is 10% what happens to me . . . and 90% how I respond to it.
- There are two things I have learned: There is a God, and that God is not me.
- Following the path of least resistance is what makes rivers and humans crooked.
- Going to a church gathering does not make me a Christian any more than going to McDonald's will change me into a hamburger.
- Real friends are those who — when I feel like I've made a fool of myself — don't think I've done a permanent job.
- My worst days are never so bad that I am beyond the *reach* of God's grace. And my best days are never so good that I am beyond the *need* of God's grace.

One may also realize certain perspectives need to change after evaluating situations of everyday life.

- Funny how a US \$5 bill looks so big when I give it in an offering . . . but so small when I take it to the market.
- Funny how long a couple of hours are in worship but how short they are when watching a movie.
- Funny how I can't think of anything to say when I pray, but I don't have difficulty thinking of things to talk about with a friend.
- Funny how I think it is hard to read a chapter in the Bible but how easy it is to read 100 pages in my favorite book.
- Funny how I need 2 or 3 weeks advance notice to fit a church meeting into my schedule but can adjust for other events at the last minute.
- Funny how I believe newspapers, reporters, and the evening news but question what the Bible says.
- Funny how difficult it is for me to learn a simple Gospel presentation well enough to tell others, but how easy it is for me to understand and repeat gossip about someone else.

Your perspectives may also change when you reflect on people of faith who have gone before you. For example, with regard to trusting God in significant challenges, consider Moses. One unknown author noted:

First, Moses had to get the Israelites across the Red Sea in one night. If they went on a narrow path, double file, the line would be 800 miles long and would require 35 days and nights to get through. So, there had to be a space in the Red Sea, 3 miles wide so that they could walk 5,000 abreast to get over in one night.

Moses and the people of Israel were headed for the desert, but what was God going to do with them? They had to be fed, and feeding 2 or 3 million people requires a lot of food. According to some experts, Moses would have needed 1,500 tons of food each day. To bring that much food, two freight trains each a mile long would be required in today's world!

While in the desert, the Israelites would need firewood for cooking. It is estimated that it would take 4,000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day. And just think, they were forty years in transit. Oh, yes, they would need water. If they only had enough to drink and also wash a few dishes each day, it would take millions of gallons of water. This would require a daily freight train with tank cars that would stretch over hundreds of miles.

But then another problem: Each time they camped at the end of the day, a campground of 750 square miles was needed.

Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? Of course not! Moses believed in God. God took care of these things for him. Now, do you think God is sufficient to meet your challenges when you are following Him?

The most effective way to know when perspectives must change is through the prayerful study of God's Word.

Psalm 119:18, Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

For your perspective to shift from being self-centered to God-honoring and God-glorifying, significant change is necessary. This type of change, however, doesn't just happen. Instead, it usually requires forethought and prayerful planning. Here is one approach to making Christ-honoring changes.

- Get a pen/pencil and a card. Write (at the top) an area in your life that you believe God wants you to change.
- Use a concordance or online Bible search (ask others for help if needed) to find as many Scripture references as you can which deal with your area of change. Write down those references on your card. As an example, if you put down "anger" as something that must change, you might write down Ephesians 4:31 and James 1:19.
- As a result of searching the Scriptures, prayerfully consider what God would have you stop ("put-off") and what He wants you to start thinking, speaking, and doing instead ("put-on"). As an example, you may need to put off speaking quickly when you recognize feelings of anger, and, instead, put on speaking slowly and only after you have all the facts relevant to the situation, based on James 1:19.
- Make and follow a plan to practice the "put-on" throughout each day, particularly in situations where you are tempted, once again, to repeat the "put off".
- Finally, read through the verses you have chosen, and pick one which you will memorize this week. Write it out on your card, carry it with you (in your purse or pocket), and recite it often. Especially if you are tempted to sin, take out your card and recite your verse instead.

See *The Easy Way to Memorize Scripture* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/The%20Easy%20Way%20to%20Memorize%20Scripture.pdf> and *Memorizing Scripture . . . For a Change* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Memorizing%20Scripture.pdf>

It would be helpful to share with a family member and/or a close friend what change you are anticipating. Ask them to hold you accountable to memorize the verse(s). Linking verses and their memorization to the change process helps you stay grounded in the Word of God instead of following your own thoughts or feelings. You have the power of God's Word available, so trust it to accomplish its purposes.

Some possible areas of change, certainly non-exhaustive, are listed below with associated scripture references. *The verse texts are printed at the conclusion of this study.*

Anger: Proverbs 15:1; 22:24-25; 29:11; 30:33, 1 Corinthians 13:5, Ephesians 4:26, 31-32, James 1:19-20

Stealing: Exodus 20:15, Romans 13:9, Ephesians 4:28

Cursing: Proverbs 10:19, Ephesians 4:29, James 1:26

Lying: Proverbs 19:5, 9, Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9

Gossip: Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 20:19; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:29

Bitterness, unforgiveness: Matthew 5:23-24, Romans 12:18, Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13, 1 Peter 3:8-9

Hatred: Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:35

Greed: Proverbs 15:27, Luke 12:15, 2 Corinthians 9:6-12, 1 Timothy 6:17

Pride: Matthew 20:26-28, Philippians 2:3-4, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Grumbling: Ephesians 5:20, Philippians 2:14, 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18

Worry: Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7

Thought life: Philippians 4:8-9, Colossians 3:2

Sexual immorality: 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3

Smoking, drunkenness, drug abuse: Romans 6:13; 13:13, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 5:18

In addition to active involvement in the Word of God, set aside time to express your dependence on God Almighty for maintaining Christ-honoring change in your life.

In his book *The Joy of Fearing God*, Jerry Bridges relates a practical plan to help one grow in the knowledge of God and the realization of His powerful presence in your life. Mr. Bridges states, “Conscious dependence on God is a spiritual habit that must be developed.” The following suggestions can help you attain that beneficial goal.

- Take time at the beginning of each day to acknowledge your dependence on God for life and breath and everything else. During this time, thank Him for specific blessings, both spiritual and material.
- Think ahead through your day. Acknowledge your dependence on God for all your foreseen activities of the day, asking for His direction and enablement in each of them.
- Commit to Him the *unforeseen* events of the day, again asking for His ability to respond to each in a way pleasing to Him.
- Seek to develop the habit of continually offering throughout the day those short, silent prayers that recognize your powerlessness and His power. Use whatever reminder strategies will help you develop this habit, such as sticky notes in strategic places or the hourly chime on a clock. Don’t consider such methods too childish or “unspiritual” to help you learn this important habit.
- Pray regularly that God will help you become more and more aware that you are in fact dependent on Him for life and breath and everything else.
- Don’t be discouraged by failures in implementing this plan. A habit of acknowledging your dependence on God may take time.

Change that draws you closer to the Lord involves spiritual warfare but always remember . . . “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

No matter what challenges come your way and no matter what perspectives you need to change, you are assured of being an overwhelming conqueror in meeting these situations as you abide in Christ.

See *Abiding in God . . . A Necessity for Christ-like Development* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Abiding%20in%20God%20A%20Necessity%20for%20Christ-like%20Development.pdf>

Also, be encouraged by reviewing who you are in Christ.

See *Your Identity in Christ* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Your%20Identity%20in%20Christ.pdf>

Trust the Lord, obey God’s Word, and continually give thanks to God for specific Christ-like changes that are being developed in your life.

PASSAGES CITED IN THIS ARTICLE

• ANGER

Proverbs 15:1, A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 22:24-25, Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered,²⁵ or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.

Proverbs 29:11, Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.

Proverbs 30:33, For as churning cream produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.

1 Corinthians 13:5, It [*love*] does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [*Explanation added*]

Ephesians 4:26, “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,

Ephesians 4:31-32, Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

James 1:19-20, My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

• STEALING

Exodus 20:15, You shall not steal.

Romans 13:9, The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Ephesians 4:28, Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

- **CURSING**

Proverbs 10:19; Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

Ephesians 4:29, Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

James 1:26, Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

- **LYING**

Proverbs 19:5, 9, A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free. . . . A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish.

Ephesians 4:25, Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Colossians 3:9, Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

- **GOSSIP**

Proverbs 11:13, A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.

Proverbs 16:28, A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.

Proverbs 20:19, A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.

Proverbs 26:20, Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.

2 Corinthians 12:20, For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.

Ephesians 4:29, Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

- **BITTERNESS, UNFORGIVENESS**

Matthew 5:23-24, Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Romans 12:18, If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ephesians 4:32, Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-13, Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

1 Peter 3:8-9, Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

- **HATRED**

Matthew 5:43-48, You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 6:35, But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

- **GREED**

Proverbs 15:27, The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live.

Luke 12:15, Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-12, Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. ¹²This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

1 Timothy 6:17, Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

- **PRIDE**

Matthew 20:26-28, “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Philippians 2:3-4, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

1 Peter 5:5-6, In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

- **GRUMBLING**

Ephesians 5:20, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:14, Do everything without grumbling or arguing

Philippians 4:4, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18, Rejoice always, ... ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

- **WORRY**

Philippians 4:6-7, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:7, Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

- **THOUGHT LIFE**

Philippians 4:8-9, Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Colossians 3:2, Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- **SEXUAL IMMORALITY**

1 Corinthians 6:18, Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3, It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality

- **SMOKING, DRUNKENNESS, DRUG ABUSE**

Romans 6:13, Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

Romans 13:13, Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Ephesians 5:18, Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,