

Seeing Ourselves Through the Eyes of Hope*

We do not see things as they are.

We see things as we are.

—Dad

I recently came upon the above quote in *A Father’s Book of Wisdom*, a book given to me by a close friend. The “Dad” is the father of H. Jackson Brown, Jr., the book’s writer. I had to read these lines several times because they turned my thinking, and forced me to discern their meaning. There was something there, but what was it?

“Dad” gets points for candor and truth-telling. At least by my account. And it is the kind of truth-telling that invites the hearer to take a moment and do a personal inventory. “Wait a minute here, what am I seeing and why do I see this in this light?” Persuading people to take a personal look often elicits a strong and negative response. Why? Perception is reality—until it passes through due diligence!

Thus the difficulty with which the pro-LGBTQ+ world hears our message of hope for change and healing. Their reality is based on their perception of “the way things are,” just as our reality is based on our perceptions. We all see things from a faulty understanding sometimes, and not necessarily the way they are in reality. And, for us to convince someone otherwise, we need to enter their world, or at the very least, try to understand just exactly how it is that they see things. Theologically, this is what the Incarnation of Christ was all about: God becoming human in order to save us from ourselves. Missionally, this is our method. Like Paul, we try to become all things to all people that in so doing, some might be saved.



Point One is getting people to understand that reality may be something quite beyond their momentary perception. This issue of seeing things the way we are applies not only to evangelism and persuasion techniques regarding LGBTQ+ issues. Everyone does this. Indeed, Christians struggling with any number of issues can get “stuck” on this point, particularly if they are attempting to overcome a sin because of their deeply held spiritual convictions. Many find it hard to “recover” from their illness, addiction or problem, or to overcome unwanted same-sex attractions (SSA) because they see themselves incompletely. Perhaps they see themselves as incapable of change. Maybe they see their SSA or other condition as unchangeable. We, as truth-tellers, have a responsibility to inform their perception, to give them information which will give them the option of changing their opinions or actions which were previously based on an incomplete understanding of themselves. Much of this “information” about themselves should come from their Creator. He made them, let Him tell them what He had in mind! We simply remind people of God’s words.

All in all, I think it is a pretty bold move to ask someone to set aside his or her self-perception, in order to try to see things from a different angle. It’s like asking a New Yorker to move to Irian Jaya and live in a grass hut. Or like asking a stone-age native from Borneo to move to Beverly Hills. Either way, there will be self-conscious apprehension and high anxiety. Yet this is what we do at Outpost! We ask people to step out of their reality and see things from a completely different perspective. It’s a whole new world, and everyone feels off balance (especially at first). People want equilibrium. They like things the way they always were. (Not that that’s possible!)

I recall a joke about church politics that might shed some light on why things are as hard as they are: “The seven last words of the Church: We’ve never done it that way before!” People tell this joke to poke fun at how things (don’t) change in churches. But this is merely an extension of human nature. We are all admittedly uncomfortable about change. Any change. A New Testament picture of children learning offers a bit of insight. In Galatians 3:24, there was a hired hand whose sole job was to get the kids to school. Job Title: tutor (in the NASB). Tools: horse whip. He would literally beat the kids, driving them like cattle to school. The conventional thinking of the day was, if there were no tutor, the kids would dawdle and rebel and never quite make it to school. The children’s attitude is in all of us. Why would we want to change? Fishing and skipping rope are much more fun than school! And school would change us.

This phenomenon is very interesting on the flip side of this issue as well. Have you ever met someone who, in all his enthusiasm for daring feats of amazement, says things like, “It’s as easy as falling off a log” or “It’s like riding a bike.” Or, (and this one especially grates on me when I’m having trouble) “Hey, if I can do it, anyone can!” They easily exude confidence in others, when they see it accomplished in their own life. They see others the way they see themselves. They truly see the other being just like themselves, not so much the way the other one is in reality.

This attitude, however, may actually encourage us to learn the new thing. It may inspire hope in us that we can actually change when we feel hopeless about change. The lightness of heart may make the prospect of change really positive. Change will then be seen as a good thing, rather than something to fear or disdain.

So, how can we embrace optimistic hope about our own ability and willingness to change? How are we to engender that hope in others? Let me leave you with this scripture:

Hebrews 10:23-25: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ... encouraging one another; and [this] all the more...” (NASB)

We are given this injunction by the writer of the book of Hebrews as encouragement to persevere. We shall overcome!

Dan P. is the Senior Pastor of TCJHOP and Interim President of Outpost Ministries and has been on staff since 1993.

**This article first appeared in Dan’s World, July 1998. It has been abridged and updated. Used with permission.*



OUTPOST MINISTRIES

PO BOX 22429 • ROBBINSDALE, MN 55422-0429

Register Now!

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

SPRING FUNDRAISING BANQUET

MARCH 25, 2023



HOPE2023
Restored Hope Network
Annual Conference
Online, June 9-10, 2023

For strugglers, family members,
 counselors, pastors, and laypeople

Register now at RestoredHopeNetwork.org/hopeconf

Prayer Requests

Praise God for the restart of support groups after our Christmas break. Attendance continues to remain steady, with some groups experiencing more growth as new folks find the ministry.

Praise God for so many volunteers stepping in to help in the office during January. With their help, we finished both mailing projects ahead of schedule and moved the library.

Continue to pray for the search committee as they look for an organization president. Pray for wisdom in the search, and that God would orchestrate a connection that brings a leader to us.

Pray for the Spring Banquet, that the message of transformation and change would be evident. Pray also for new invitations to be extended and accepted, that more would be able to hear the good news of hope and healing.

PLEASE CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Here's my gift of \$500 _____ \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ Other _____

To support the ministry of _____ (List staff name or other designation)

_____ Charge my Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express _____ Check Enclosed

I authorize Outpost to charge my credit card for the above amount. Should I choose to change or cancel this transaction, I will contact the Donor Relations Manager within 24 hours at 763-210-2636 or donations@tcjh.org.

Signature for Credit Card Authorization: _____

Outpost is a ministry of the Twin Cities Justice House of Prayer, which is incorporated under the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act. Contributions are solicited with the understanding that Outpost Ministries has complete discretion and control over the use of all donated funds. No goods or services are provided in connection with these gifts unless otherwise noted.

Mail to:
PO Box 22429
Robbinsdale, MN 55422



ON: Office Use Only
Last Four _____
Date _____
Staff: _____

Credit Card #: _____ Exp. Date: _____/_____/_____ CVV (3 digit code): _____

Staff will shred the bottom portion of the form to protect your privacy.