

Perceived perceptions and proper perspectives

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I believe we human beings have a perception problem. We often think we have the proper perspective on an issue when in fact we are way off.

There's a story that Thomas Wheeler, one time CEO of the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, tells on himself: He and his wife were driving along an interstate highway when he noticed that their car was low on gas. Wheeler got off the highway at the next exit and soon found a rundown gas station with just one gas pump. He asked the lone attendant to fill the tank and check the oil, then went for a little walk around the station to stretch his legs.

As he was returning to the car, he noticed that the attendant and his wife were engaged in an animated conversation. The conversation stopped as he paid the attendant. But as he was getting back into the car, he saw the attendant wave and heard him say, "It was great talking to you."

As they drove out of the station, Wheeler asked his wife if she knew the man. She readily admitted she did. They had gone to high school together and had dated steadily for about a year. "Boy, were you lucky that I came along," bragged Wheeler. "If you had married him, you'd be the wife of a gas station attendant instead of the wife of a chief executive officer."

"My dear," replied his wife, "if I had married him, he'd be the chief executive officer and you'd be the gas station attendant."

We often think we have the proper perspective on an issue when in fact we are way off. Jesus understood this propensity for us humans to get it wrong. Especially when it comes to things spiritual. So he told a few parables. He said the kingdom of heaven is like a small seed. A mustard seed to be precise. If you have ever seen a mustard seed then you know what a ridiculous statement this is. They are as small as a grain of sand. You can literally hold thousands of them comfortably in the palm of your hand. Yet it grows into a very large bush. Large enough for birds to build their nest among its branches.

Why did Jesus choose such a small item to represent something so large as heaven? He did this because even though the Kingdom of Heaven is enormous we often are blind to its presence. God is at work, even though our human eyes often fail to perceive what is happening.

As Christians we understand that small things can have real influence, but we live in a society that is captivated with bigness. As a result, we sometimes overlook the tiny seed problems that are at the root of so many of these difficult situations.

It's the little things. Tiny viruses the size of a pin head, heart valves no larger than a man's thumbnail, single votes in an election, an ill-chosen word from a loved one - little things have tremendous power.

Sometimes it takes just a little bit of patience to work with people. Sometimes it takes just a little bit of love to redeem a situation. Sometimes it takes just a little bit of grace to bring about healing. Sometimes it takes just a little bit of understanding to save a marriage.

When God moved in history for the salvation of humankind, He did not do so with a legion of angels, or some super computer or advertising campaign. He did so with a seed planted in the womb of a peasant girl. That microscopic seed would one day grow to full life and change the world and die for your sins and mine.

Little things become much when placed in the Master's hand. That's the proper perspective.