



because proportionately, she had given much more than any of the rich people bringing their offerings that day. So Jesus pointed her out to his disciples, declaring that she in her poverty had given more than those who gave in their abundance. Talk about a shift in perspective!

In the gentlest, most loving way possible, Jesus helped his listeners see the world a little differently. He removed

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their sunglasses and showed them a different view.

The underlying message of my experience in the Nevada desert with my children, the bird-watching moment with my husband, and Jesus' parables is a crucial one: The way we see the world is not the only way to see it. And, a second but just-as-important message is that the best way to help others understand your point of view is to spend some time and effort trying to understand theirs.

The moment my daughter put my sunglasses on and saw the funnel cloud we had been trying to show her, I felt a twinge of remorse for moments before being so frustrated that she couldn't see it.

"I'm sorry, sweetheart!" I told her. "I understand now why we weren't seeing the same thing. I just needed to see it the way you did."

Jesus could never have been as effective with his storytelling if he didn't fully grasp the local cultures and customs. It was his familiarity with the perspectives of those around him which allowed him to craft effective parables. He had already seen the world through their eyes, and now he wanted them to try on *his* sunglasses. It is my lifelong desire to continually set aside my assumptions and take a look at the world through God's eyes.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becky St. Clair is a freelance writer living in California with her husband and three young children. She's an avid reader with a passion for storytelling, the ocean, Thai curry, rainy days, writing actual letters, and travel, which she unfortunately does rarely.

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Coordinators: Lynette Ecord, Jerrod Songy, Deyvy Rodriguez, Uzziel Maldonado

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SHARING SUNGLASSES: STEWARDING OUR PERSPECTIVE

BY BECKY ST. CLAIR

This summer, my family was driving home from visiting grandparents. We were somewhere in the endless desolation that is I-80 through Nevada when we spotted it: A long, narrow, brown funnel cloud sitting atop one of the hills near the road. We call it a dust devil; others may know it as something else, but it's essentially a mini tornado made up solely of dirt and dust (and maybe some fragments of tumbleweeds).

"Kids, look!" my husband and I exclaimed, eager for something to show them out the window. "Check out that awesome funnel cloud!"

STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.



We pointed but the kids just stared and squinted. “Where?” they all asked.

My husband and I did our best to describe where we were seeing it, but if you know anything about the Nevada desert, you know that one

brown hill looks just about like the next, and trying to find any sort of reference point from which to direct someone’s gaze is pretty much impossible. (In case you’ve never been to Nevada, try pointing out to someone else a smudge on a blank wall across the room and you’ll get the general idea.)

After several moments of exasperated pointing, it suddenly occurred to me that my husband and I were looking at the landscape completely differently from how our kids were seeing it.

Removing my sunglasses, I handed them to my daughter and said, “Now look.”

As soon as she put my sunglasses on, she exclaimed, “Oohhh! Wow! I see it now!”

I turned and looked back to where I knew the dust devil was. Without my sunglasses, the cloud had completely disappeared against the backdrop of the blue sky. The lenses through which I had been seeing the desert were showing me a different picture of the world around me than that which my children were able to see without those lenses.

On another occasion, my husband and I were on the front porch, relaxing and watching the birds flit around our yard. At one point he spotted a bird we rarely, if ever, see near our home, and started describing where it was so I could see it, too. Similar to the Nevada desert, in a 100-foot tree full of branches it is difficult to pinpoint a specific location with mere words and gesturing, and I was completely lost among the leaves.

Finally, after looking down at me from his 7-inches-taller-than-me stature, he bent over and placed his head against mine so that his eyes

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were level with my eyes. Once he was seeing the tree from my perspective, he understood why I couldn’t see what he was seeing, and was able to point out where the bird was in such a way that I was eventually able to spot it.

Both of these stories illustrate an important life skill I’ve been intentionally working on developing in myself over the last decade or so: Perspective.

Proverbs 18:2 says, “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing their opinion” (ESV).

Unfortunately, this was me for many of my younger years. Extremely opinionated and sure of myself, I wore my heart on my sleeve--or rather, as a giant, eye-catching, occasionally appalling hat in most cases. Whenever I formed an opinion based on what I saw or heard from my perspective, I absolutely knew it was correct, and assumed everyone else in the world would agree.

Through trial and lots of error, I’ve learned the simple truth that my perspective and experience are not the only ones out there, and that listening and working to understand those of others doesn’t negate mine--it simply expands and enhances it.

Interestingly, many of Jesus’ parables recounted in the Bible also serve this purpose. Not only are they meant to teach the listener something about God, but they also reveal perspectives and experiences listeners are not likely to have previously understood. For example: the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. Those listening to Jesus’ story would never have considered a Samaritan worth interacting with, as they were viewed socially as lesser people. So for Jesus to tell a story wherein a Samaritan is the hero would have been mind-blowing to them. Someone they would consider unworthy was suddenly someone Jesus was extolling as a prime example of how to be “good.” I’m sure that rocked their world more than a little!

Jesus wasn’t telling stories to make his listeners feel good; he was doing it to shake them up a bit. To make them think. To expand their worldviews. He knew that growth doesn’t happen in a vacuum, so telling stories they already knew or to which they could predict the lesson would only serve to confirm what they already knew (or thought they knew) to be true.

It was the same when Jesus pointed out the poor woman giving two small coins at the temple (Luke 21:1-4). Amidst all the wealth and pomp of many others, this woman stood out to Jesus

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