A Matter of Perspective

I. Introduction.
   A. Everyone sees things differently.
      1. Different point of view.
      2. Certain actions might be interpreted differently depending on a person's perspective.
   B. Example: Rain.
      1. To the farmer.
         a. Whose crops badly need the rain, the farmer is happy.
      2. To the young boy.
         a. Who loves baseball, he's sad because he won't get to play his game this afternoon.
      3. To the construction worker.
         a. Who is supposed to work on the exterior of a house, it's a lost day's wages.
      4. To others.
         a. Rain makes the day dreary and depressing.
   C. A Matter of Perspective.
      1. It all depends on our own perspective.
      2. And all of us have different perspectives in life.
         a. Because we're different people.
         b. We have different likes and dislikes.
      3. An eighty year old is going to see things differently than a twenty year old.
      4. A business man might look at things in a different way than a farmer.
      5. A child views the world differently than an adult.
      6. A parent sees things differently than a single person with no children.
      7. Someone who is grieving over the loss of a loved one has a different perspective than someone celebrating the birth of a new baby.
      8. Someone who has recently lost a job might look at life in a different way than someone who just got a big promotion.
   D. This morning's lesson.
      1. This is a fact.
      2. Certain lessons that we need to learn.
      3. We'll talk about two of them this morning.

II. We need to learn to see things through the eyes of others.
   A. We all see things differently.
      1. I feel confident to say that there are no two people in this audience who see everything the same way.
      2. A fact of life: we have different perspectives.
   B. Factors which make us see things differently.
      1. Age.
         a. A two year old certainly doesn't view life the same way a 75 year old does.
      2. Marital & family status.
         a. Big difference in perspective from single to married to married with kids.
a. A CEO sees most things differently than a hourly laborer.
4. Gender.
a. No secret that men and women see things completely differently.
5. Past experiences.
a. Each person has experienced different things which make our perspective different.
b. Soldier in Vietnam, survived serious illness, bad family life, etc.
a. Some people are just thankful to be alive, others don't know what it's like to be sick.
7. Politics.
a. Republicans, Democrats, independent: completely different ideologies.
b. Can view exactly the same things and have completely different thoughts about them.
8. Education.
a. An Ivy League graduate and a high school dropout are not likely to see things the same way.
9. Probably many other factors.
10. Point: All of these factors combine to give each person a unique perspective on life.
a. Different from every other person in the world.

C. God tells us that we need to learn to view things through the perspective of others.
1. Philippians 2:3-4.
a. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."
b. Emphasis on the "interests of others."
c. God's words to us: Consider the interests of others.
   * Consider their needs.
   * Don't just look at things from the perspective of how it benefits me.
   * Learn to look at it from the perspective of how it affects other people.
a. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."
b. Emphasis on "consider one another."
   * Give attention to each other.
   * Think about each other and each person's unique needs and perspective.
c. The writer is telling us that we need to consider each other to know how to motivate each one.
   * We must learn to find out what makes each person tick.
   * How can I stir up my brother?
     * First, I have to know something about him.
     * I need to know how he sees things.
3. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.
a. "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."
b. Think about what Paul is saying.
   * He tried to see things from the perspectives of all different kinds of people.
     * Jew, Gentile, weak.
   * So that he might know how to teach them.
     * so that they could be saved.

D. Impact on our lives.
1. If we can learn this principle, think about how it could affect us.
2. It will strengthen our marriages.
3. It will make us better parents.
4. It will make us better employees.
5. It would make us a better supervisor or boss.
6. It will improve our friendships.
7. It will draw us closer together as a church.
8. We will become better teachers.
9. It will improve just about every aspect of our lives.
   a. Learn to see things from another person's perspective.

III. We need to learn to see things the way that God sees them.

A. We need to learn to see "things" the way God sees them.
   1. Men sometimes get things backwards.
      a. We place the wrong value on things.
   2. We want the things that we shouldn't want.
   3. And we don't want the things that would be good for us.
      a. "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for
darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."
      b. We sometimes put more value in the fleshly, temporal, unrighteous things than we do the
eternal things.
   5. God sees things for what they are.
   6. In that respect, we need to learn to see things the way God sees them.
      a. To assign the same value to things as He does.
      b. To recognize the good for being good.
      c. And to recognize the evil for what it is.
   7. Moses was able to do this.
      b. Understood that suffering affliction with his people was better than enjoying the passing
pleasures of sin.
      c. These "pleasures" of life were temporary; but the gift of God was eternal.
      d. Moses saw the big picture: exactly the way God sees things.

B. We need to learn to see other people the way that God sees them.
      a. God sees the big picture.
      b. He considers all the works of men.
   2. Sometimes, our perception of a man is determined by one or two actions.
      a. If we have one meal at a person's house, and the food isn't good, we might develop the idea
that she was a bad cook.
         * that may or may not be true; it could be that one meal was the one bad out of a hundred.
      b. Or if we meet a person, and they are having a bad day, we might conclude that he or she is
not a very nice person.
         * again, it may or may not be true.
      c. Or if when a husband comes home from work, and he notices the one or two things that aren't
done, and ignores all the rest of the work his wife has done that day.
   3. God does not just look at one or two actions of a person when he evaluates who they are.
      a. He considers everything.
         * A fair judgment or evaluation.
b. We need to learn to see people in that kind of light.

4. We also need to see other people the way that God sees them in another way.
   a. Through loving eyes.
   b. When God looks at a man, any man, He loves them and wants them to do what is right.
      * He may not love what they do or even who they have become.
      * But He loves their soul and wants them to come back to the fold.
   c. 2 Peter 3:9, "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
   d. Sometimes, we develop certain attitudes toward certain types of people.
      * Hate, prejudice, bias.
      * And we develop an attitude like Jonah had.
      * When we look at a wicked or evil person, we need to see a lost soul.

5. Finally, we need to learn past hypocritical actions, like God does.
   a. This is the hardest part to apply.
      * Because it is not always easy to see through hypocrisy.
   b. In Matthew 6, Jesus points out that God saw through the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.
      * Charitable deeds, prayers, fastings, to be seen of men.
      * but the "Father who sees in secret" saw right through those hypocritical acts.
   c. I guess the moral of the story is that you can't take everything at face value.
      * You need to look at all aspects of a person's life to see who they really are.

6. Wouldn't it be great if we could see people like God sees them?
   a. See the big picture, a fair judgment.
   b. See through loving eyes.
   c. See past the hypocrisy.

C. We need to learn to see ourselves the way God sees us.

   1. Men see things differently than God.
      a. We can fool men about who we are.
      b. Think about how many politicians, religious leaders, and other high profile people who later it
         has been found out that they had dark skeletons in their closet.
   2. Sometimes we can even fool ourselves.
      a. We might develop a higher opinion of ourselves than what we should.
         * Romans 12:3, "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think."
      b. We might look out at the world and sees its wickedness and think to ourselves.
         * I'm not near as bad as they are, so I'm doing pretty good.
      c. We might start listening to the praise of men.
         * If people constantly tell us how good we are, we might eventually start to believe it.
         * Even if it may not be true.
      d. We may ignore our weaknesses and faults completely.
   3. Have you ever wondered…
      a. What does God see when He looks at me?
      b. When He looks at my heart, what does He see?
         * 1 Samuel 16:7, "for the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward
            appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
      c. When God examines my thoughts, what does He think of me?
         * 1 Chronicles 28:9, "the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the
            thoughts."
   4. Imagine for a minute if we could learn to see ourselves the way God sees us.
      a. We would know the exact truth about ourselves.
      b. We would know exactly what we would need to change.
      c. We would know the exact things we need to do in order to go to heaven.
   5. We can see ourselves the way God sees.
      a. Through His word.
b. God tells us what He's looking for.
c. All we have to do is compare ourselves to the standard.
d. 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves."

IV. Conclusion: A Matter of Perspective.

A. Three Choices.
   1. See things from our own perspective.
   2. See things from the perspective of others.
   3. See things from God's vantage point.

B. We must learn to do all three.
   1. If we want to go to heaven.
   2. God has told us we have great responsibilities toward others.
      a. Thus we must care about the perspective of others.
   3. And certainly, if we want to go to heaven, we must figure out what God is looking for in us.