

Chapter 2

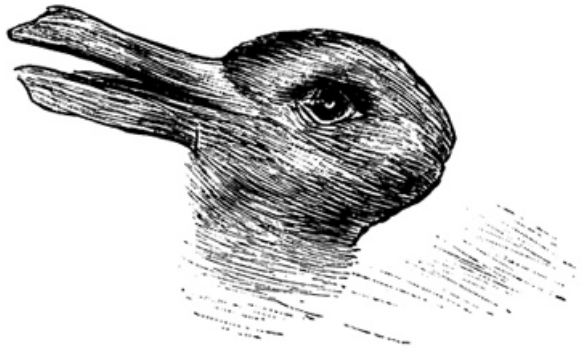
The Honor of the Calling

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

~ Mark 10:45 ~

Perception is reality. In other words, how we perceive what is going on around us is what we label “reality.” But not everyone perceives the same situation or thing the same way.

Take optical illusions, for instance. Someone can look at this image and see a duck, while the other may see a rabbit. Some folks can see both. Some can see neither. The person who was chased or snipped at by a duck as child will not only see the duck, but they might be reminded of that stressful episode and feel anxious when looking at this image. One image, many perceptions. Which one is real? Whatever you choose to believe and feel about this image is your reality.



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Another example. You receive an email from your boss that reads “I need to see you in my office at 5:00 PM today.” Some folks will read the message and immediately begin to sweat, “Oh no! What have I done?” They will run one scenario after another over and over in their heads, preparing to defend themselves. At 5:00 PM the employee is surprised and relieved to find out that there is no reprimand coming, only a simple inquiry if they would enjoy being sponsored by the company in an upcoming marathon. Meanwhile, they have wasted the whole day being anxious, unproductive and even angry – over a perception, not the truth.

2 THE HEART OF THE CAREGIVER

When we face disability or chronic illness and the dramatic shifts and chaos they can cause, our perception is often, “Why me?” or “What did I do to deserve this?” or “Why does this person I love have to suffer?” Sometimes we even look to heaven and blame God, questioning His authority and love. With this perception about our situation, we can quickly spiral downward into doubt, despair, depression, and hopelessness.

This chapter is all about aligning our perception with Truth - God’s Truth. How we feel about our caregiving situation is only our perception based on our beliefs and opinions. But beliefs and opinions can change, so our feelings can change. We can go from feeling overwhelmed to being overjoyed!

The Truth is that we all may have different journeys, but the ultimate destination for each one of us is that we become more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Scripture tells us that:

- We can have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16)
- The Holy Spirit is working in us just like it did in Jesus. (2 Tim. 1:14)
- We can do all that Jesus did and more. (John 14:12)

This is exciting news! He healed the sick, raised the dead, taught Truth, loved the unlovable – but not as a Heavenly Rock Star with a huge ego. Rather, He did it all as an obedient, humble servant.

*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his
own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

Philippians 2:6-7

Like Him, you have been called to serve and that is a high and honorable calling.

Your next response may be, “Sure, but that was Jesus! I didn’t volunteer for this. It’s not what I planned or wanted. I didn’t ask for a calling. I was just fine where I was. The timing of this is all wrong. I am the least likely to be able to do something like this well.”

“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” 1 Corinthians 1:26-27

In addition to not feeling up to the job, this whole situation has probably interrupted your plans. Perhaps this disability or illness has completely destroyed your hopes and dreams, let alone wreaked havoc with your daily schedule. We all have a picture of how things are supposed to go. Letting old plans go and creating a new lifestyle can be very difficult. A root of resentment or bitterness can take hold if we focus on what we think could have or should have been.

The bottom line is that only God is in control of your destiny. You may think you should be headed in one direction, but He has plans for you that cannot be thwarted.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

What are some plans that have had to be put “on hold” or completely abandoned since you started caring for this person?

Amazingly, when we look closely at the people in the Bible whom God used greatly, most of them were unlikely choices and were called in to service when and how they were least expecting.

4 THE HEART OF THE CAREGIVER

Take a look at the “calling” of three Bible heroes – David, Moses and Gideon. We could also look at others like Mary the Mother of Jesus, Joseph, Esther, Rahab, Abraham and Noah, to name a few. Not one of them had plans to do what God called them to do. They were all caught by surprise. Most felt completely incapable of what they were being asked to do. Some even tried to talk God out of the calling, but in the end, they all said “yes.”

DAVID was the youngest of eight brothers. He was out doing his regular duty of tending sheep on the day Samuel arrived to anoint a King of Israel. Read 1 Samuel 16. Neither Samuel, nor David’s father, Jesse, (nor probably any of his older brothers) thought he was the obvious choice. Samuel went straight for Eliab, probably the oldest, tallest and best looking. Pay special attention to 1 Samuel 16:7.

MOSES had run from his life of royalty and had launched a new career tending sheep for his father-in-law when God called to him out of a burning bush and told him to go to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Read Exodus 3 and 4, but give careful consideration to Exodus 4:13.

GIDEON was hiding from his enemies in a winepress trying to get a little wheat threshing done when an angel of the LORD appeared to him and told him to go save Israel from the Midianites. Read Judges 6, but give careful attention to Judges 6:15.

The whole Bible is about the triumph of the power of God over human weakness and sin. The Bible is a love story about a God who takes worn out, sinful, messed up, incapable people and makes them His extraordinary heroes. You, my friend, have been tapped to become one of those! But the choice is still yours.

- You can ignore the call and run from the task at hand;
- You can try and do it your way and through your natural abilities;

- Or you can accept God's invitation to let Him do something wonderful and extraordinary through you that will transform you and the person you are caring for. Your relationship can become a sign of hope to a hurting world.

Accepting the call to serve others is the greatest commandment of the Bible. It is what we were created to do – to love and serve God first and then love and serve our neighbors.

In the coming weeks we will learn more about Biblical love. We will discover the power of God to love others through us. We will search for the joy and benefits of loving selflessly. We will learn how to experience the love of God for ourselves. This will form the firm foundation we need from which to love and serve others.

As you read these words of encouragement from Scripture, ask God to give you a new perspective and hope. Then, let Him write these promises on your heart.

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. Hebrews 6:10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped. Proverbs 11:25 (The Message)

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matthew 25:23

As this revelation of who you are in Christ and what you have been called to do occurs, take these next steps to secure this transformation.

6 THE HEART OF THE CAREGIVER

1. Choose to reject the lie that suffering or struggling is “punishment.” Realize that you have been deceived. Suffering is an attitude or perception. You can choose the truth and have a different attitude all together about your trial. Scripture says that those who are suffering are precious to God, as are those who serve them. Scriptures say that trials can refine us and bring out the best of who we are.

2. Confess to God that you have been looking at this the wrong way. Ask Him to give you eyes to see and ears to hear His Truth about your situation.

3. Allow God to show you the negative feelings and destructive behavior that have resulted from these false beliefs, then ask Him to help you to let go of hard feelings and old behaviors.

4. With this new understanding, forgive those who have hurt you. Let the hurt go and choose to see and hear them in a new light.

5. Own the truths you discover in God’s Word and let your reactions flow from that new understanding.

6. Spend time with people who will affirm and encourage your new identity as someone who has been chosen to a high and honorable calling.

PRAYER:

Lord, I confess that caring for

*has left me feeling forgotten and insignificant.
Open my heart and mind to perceive my situation
as a calling, an opportunity to go higher with You.*