Is our perception our reality? Has our reality has been distorted by culture, time, upbringing, and society? Do other cultures or people view what you think to be true the same way you do? The answer is no; we look at some people and certain groups in the Middle East and I can’t figure out what they’re doing. It seems totally crazy. Well they look at us and think we are crazy and they can’t figure out what we’re doing.

It’s the upbringing, it’s the world that we live in; so many things that we’ve been taught or mistaught it’s hard not to think that way.

Lee Atwater, a once powerful American political consultant to Reagan and Bush coined the phrase, “Perception is reality.” He knew that people’s perception of what was real carried more weight than the truth. This is sad.

That would mean that some of our beliefs, a few of the things we hold as true, may be little more than engineered figments of our own or someone else’s imagination. It’s sort of weird.

How much of our life is true and how much is fantasy?

EXAMPLE
My wife tells me of a time that she went to a family reunion in New York or New Jersey. Everyone was swapping old stories around the dinner table and while the group finally took a collective breath, Josephine jumped in and told a funny childhood story about her grandmother.

Her five-foot tall Italian grandmother was riding the subway in Manhattan and a bad guy tried to yank her stiff leather handbag from her. There was a pulling match and she jerked the strap out of his grasp and commenced to beat him over the head with the hard leather corners of her purse. He ran away. In her broken English she told my wife, “I was ah so ah-scared! (In reality, her grandma feared nothing!)

A relative sitting at the same table heard the account and scolded Josephine. She said in her thick NY accent, “It didn’t happen that way at all.” Then the lady told her version of the same story; but, to misquote Frankie, “She told it her way.”

In life, did it really happen or has it jut transformed through the years? Have we tried to make our life right or tried to fit into society and just accept things to the point we began to believe them?

I remember reading The Adventures of Tom Sawyer when I was a child. He lied so much that he believed his own lies. Now it makes all kind of sense because the whole world is living lies but they think they are not.
A LEGEND IN MY OWN MIND (by Seth Godin)

“Everyone lives with self mythology.
The more important a memory is to the story we tell ourselves about ourselves, the more often we rehearse the memory. And the more often we relive those memories, the less likely it is that they are true.

Despite our shared conception that we are rational actors making intelligent decisions based on an accurate view of the world and ourselves, precisely the opposite is true. Your customers, your workers, you and I, we are all figments of our imaginations.

Understanding the mythology of your partner, your customer and your audience is far more important than watching the instant replay of what actually happened.”

The guy has a valid point; people do live in a world of their private perceptions. If you were raised in another family, you would not be who you are now, especially in another culture in Europe, the Middle East or Asia, on the continent of Africa – you would be a different person because of the molding of society. Like that one verse...be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The whole design of the world is to conform you to fit in that society and to hate anybody else that isn’t like you. I don’t really think that’s what the Word says. I don’t think that’s how the Christ lived.

How can we see past our personal mythology? What lies hidden? Wouldn’t you like to know what is just below the surface, just out of our eyesight of understanding? It would be especially nice to know that about other people but we would become raving lunatics if we could read other people's thoughts. Ours are hard enough to understand.

That is the point of the teaching today. How do we regain perfect perspective? How can we return to a pure perception?

I was thinking this week how I had some of my childhood brought back before my eyes and it reminded me of things that I had wished to forget about. I didn’t realize I was such a stinker until some things came back up! It took a little while for my mind to process it because it was something I had just not thought about for such a long time. I remember at that same time I had long red hair that went almost to my belt. The Texas Police hated anybody who looked that way to the point that multiple times I had guns pulled on me when I was just walking down the street. If I ever got into a squad car they would pop the shotgun off, lay it across their lap with the barrel right in my side. This happened more than one time. It’s all because of what I looked like or as somebody told me, it was what I represented. I wasn’t a bad kid and I wasn’t out looking for trouble though it seemed to find me at times, just accidentally. I didn’t have an untarnished halo like some of you in here!
PURE PERCEPTION

What I realized is the perception of a younger child is different than what we have.

THE PERCEPTION OF A CHILD

I was asked yesterday what my definition of a miracle was. The person said, “Does a miracle have to be an amazing healing or something like that?” Before I had a chance to speak, she said, “I think God does many miraculous things for me each and every day.” I agreed.

“Miracles happen every day, change your perception of what a miracle is and you’ll see them all around you.” ~Jon Bon Jovi

That’s pretty heavy for a rocker! It’s pretty good thinking. He’s right. If we will change our perception, our perspective, our assimilated vantage, we will begin to see what God has desired for us to see.

I was on a job on Friday and there was a little gray bird. Every time I turned it stayed just a little bit out of my peripheral vision. I would turn and it kept moving. I could never see the thing clearly. I could only see it at the perceptible corner of my vision.

I thought how many things in life are like that and we just go, oh well; what difference does it make?

What is it about a young child that will help us see the power of God without filters? That’s the problem; we’ve had so many filters laid on us that it’s hard to really discern what’s really true, what’s real, what’s available, what’s not.

Matthew 18:1-5 (MSG)

At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, “Who gets the highest rank in God’s kingdom?”

2-5 For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, “I’m telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you’re not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God’s kingdom. What’s more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it’s the same as receiving me.

To “start over” could be translated as doing a U-turn, a complete about-face. He was talking to his disciples. These are people who followed him, who sleep outside at the same time he does, they eat over fires, they would come and go at times, it wasn’t a huge troop of them, but some of them would follow. These guys and girls were dedicated people. He’s telling his disciples that they are on track, but they are going the wrong way.
PURE PERCEPTION

Have you ever seen someone driving the wrong way on an interstate highway? We were driving through Pennsylvania one time and I look over and saw someone on the wrong ramp. It was an old man just driving lickety-split down the highway at highway speeds. I’m going one way close to a guard rail and he’s right on the other side thinking he’s in the slow lane. It’s crazy and it was spooky!

These guys, as good as they were and as much as they loved truth and as much as they loved Jesus Christ, he said, “You’re going the wrong way. You’re going about things wrong kittywompus. You’re not looking at things right.”

“Come here, kid.” He brought this kid and set him down using this child example and we’ll find another one. “...receive the childlike on my account.” We have to receive like childlike and I thought what does that mean?

To become childlike does not mean in action (throwing tizzies or throwing yourself on the ground), it means in simplicity. You are here, you are present; others are here and they too are present. That’s part of being a child.

“Our minds influence the key activity of the brain, which then influences everything; perception, cognition, thoughts and feelings, personal relationships; they’re all a projection of you.”

~Deepak Chopra (Indian-American author, public speaker and physician)

With a child, there is no fear and there is no judgment. There is only expectation and love. Think about it.

Entering the Kingdom of heaven is as simple as accepting the teachings of Christ at face value; no ulterior motives (who’s the greatest? It doesn’t matter.), no egos, no embellishments (you don’t add anything to it and don’t take away anything from it). It’s just face value. That’s how a child takes you; they don’t care if you’re a president, a king, or homeless. They really just don’t care. They don’t care if the candy is on the ground or if the mom gives it to them out of a bag.

We used to run ahead of one of my sisters because she would eat everything off the ground even smashed ground. We’d have to totally crush stuff on the ground in front of her so she wouldn’t eat it. She loved her candy and other people’s gum! That’s a kid!

The Kingdom of heaven is pure uncut truth; it’s pure power. It’s like a virgin forest, a pristine stream, fresh air when you walk out of a stuffy room.

A child has no preconceived ideas and no synthetic fears. They are just there and they know you are just there with them.
EXAMPLE
I remember while on a backpacking trip in the early 70’s, dipping a stainless steel Sierra Cup into the cool mountain stream and drinking for many days without filtration at that time. Today it would be unwise to drink straight out of the same streams today because of pollution. It’s probably irreversible now the way our world is. I don’t know but I don’t think in my lifetime I would do it.

How can we, as they sang at Woodstock, get back to the garden? How do we get back to the garden of our souls? How do we get back to that pure childlike belief where they take it at face value? They like you because you’re nice; they don’t like you because you’re mean. It’s real simple. There is nothing there. They don’t have the fears, they don’t have the social hierarchy, and they don’t understand it because they haven’t been taught all that stuff. You’re going to make it / you’re not going to make it; you’re good / you’re no good. They haven’t determined the year of their death; it’s just blue skies and sunshine.

DON’T STOP A FREE CHILD
This next record happened immediately before Jesus healed the four blind men in Jericho. He was on his way to his death over the next few days.

Mark 10:13-16 (KJV)
13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.
14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Imagine how that blessed those parents. The kids would not have really known anymore about Jesus than the parents told them unless they were going with the crowd and heard a little bit. He was a special dude; he was just there like they were.

What a great live teaching example. The way you would pick up a child and hold him or her in your arms; the way that child would lean into you and put their heads on your shoulder, their little arms around your neck; this is the way to view the Kingdom of God.

That’s how simple it really is. We make it complex. Let me see...if I do this and I write this and I do this and I do a vision board and get this and I pray this much every day and I do all these things....it’s so simple! You just hop in God’s lap so to speak, put your arms around him. “It’s all going to be okay, it’s all going to be okay.” It’s already been supplied.
A child can easily give all of themselves with little more than a smile. Can we? Just think that’s all a kid has. They don’t think of ownership and boundaries or titles like we do.

Just recently I was at a job and we were talking the Word and I told them that I had once been ordained and they said, “Oh that’s cool.” I said, “If you really think about it ordination is good for two things; one marrying people and two your ego.” Nobody is more special than another person. We’re all on this whole planet together.

I love thinking about the kids. They don’t have ownership and don’t have boundaries like we do. They don’t think about the neighbor’s yard until they’re told there is a neighbor’s yard. They don’t think about other people’s toys because everything is theirs and they just belong to the whole thing. They’re just going for the ride. They are enjoying it. Somebody is taking care of them day after day.

That’s us; that’s the Kingdom of God, folks in simple terms. That’s how you accept it. That’s okay; I need something, it’s got to be there.

“If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.”

~William Blake

If the filters were gone that we basically have been trained and mistrained with through churches and ministries and religion and schooling; if all of it was gone, all the prejudice that’s been drilled into our heads, if it was all gone, all we’d see is infinite. We would understand God as He is. The filters limit is. Filters are just fear because we want to fit.

A child owns nothing yet assumes everything is his. Is that a bad attitude with God who inhabits eternity, who is our Father? You own nothing but assume everything is his, is yours; assume it’s yours; assume the job; assume the health. It’s like, “OK Daddy, help me out.” Maybe you don’t even think that, maybe you just go there because you know they’re going to.

Like a story I’ve told before, I was doing a job one time at somebody’s house and this kid came screaming up to me. He had fallen on the sidewalk and had a big scratched knee. He wasn’t my kid; I didn’t even know whose kid he was. I kneeled down and he ran into my arms, put his arms around my neck crying all over my shoulder. I just took some grass and rubbed it on his knee. I said, “Do you feel better?” He stopped crying and said, “I feel good now.” He ran off and started playing. The grass didn’t heal; I didn’t know what else to do!

I was in a house the other day and this dog kept licking my arm in one place. I thought, “What is wrong with this dog?” Then I realized I had burned myself there and had forgotten about it. The dog was just trying to heal me. It blessed me and realized why he kept licking me.
A child can give everything it owns with a hug. Sometimes it gets all it needs with the reciprocation of that hug. That unassuming yet expectant attitude is the only way to truly perceive the Kingdom of God. A child has no filters, no preconceived ideas.

The Kingdom of God is everything that God touches, which is everything that stretches throughout all time and space. It is the natural and the spiritual—the past, the present, and the future. We can tap into that if we can just believe it is available.

The Kingdom of God reciprocates kindness for kindness, blessing for blessing. God, like many young children, will unabashedly give back more than we have given.

What is your perception of the entire Kingdom of God? Is it a throne with a guy with a big beard on it? Limited. Is it religious? Is it a fantasy; a unicorn with a duck? What is it? Is it true? Is it you? Mind you, the Kingdom of God spans all time and space; it is all powerful. It’s spiritual and physical power. It’s everything wrapped into one ball and we have to understand that and think about that like the simplicity of a child, even though it’s a complex thought, it is simple. It’s just being; it’s just expecting.

*Every beauty, which is seen here by persons of perception, resembles more than anything else that celestial source from which we all are come.*

~Michelangelo

Any thinking person will understand that this is bigger than us. It came from a celestial source. That’s a little bit of why he could do what he did.

I say, “The moment we grasp that the simplicity of walking with power is as simple as hugging a child who reciprocates, we will begin to see the power of the universe.” When we can just give with the simpleness of a child, we’ll begin to see the power of God.

The examples Jesus used of the children and the kingdom’s of heaven and of God tell us, to become childlike in our believing expectations as well as in our giving fully of ourselves. I think it’s more than just giving what you have; it’s giving you. What does that mean? Well who are you? Who are you really supposed to be?

My daughter-in-law after the Marathon gave me this little plaque. It had my name on it and what my name meant and it had a picture of me right before I went. She did the same for my son, Adam. My name, Mark, comes from the word Mars and it means “war like, fighting or protecting the people”. It lends toward that. I thought that was nice as it didn’t mean the beak of a small bird or a toe nail clipping! But what’s in a name? Who am I? It’s always fun when something goes along with what you think your personality is, but who really are we? If you were named “Love Doughnut” back in the 60’s, you’re not going to find a plaque with that on there!
HIDDEN PERCEPTIONS

Example

I remember being maybe 10 years old and going off base and wandering the crowded smelly back streets of residential Tokyo, I once heard an Asian man yelling at his dog in Japanese. I had a fleeting thought, “How in the world can that dog understand a word he’s saying?” Didn’t he know that dogs only understand English? Just kidding! I had never heard anyone speak to a pet in any other language than English. That was my first experience. It was new. It was revealing to me.

I also remember seeing two young Japanese kids standing in their small manicured yard, who quickly covered their eyes. I knew that they thought if they couldn’t see me, I couldn’t see them. Their perception was not reality!

Isaiah 45:2-3 (KJV)

2I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

3And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

What are these treasures that are in darkness? What are these hidden riches? What are these secret places? Isn’t it fun with archeologists find something? They have just done some kind of scans over Stonehenge in England and they realized underground there are whole buildings. They’re finding all kinds of things with this new equipment. They’ll be able to understand more of what it was.

Somebody was telling me about Machu Picchu in South America where the Inca pyramids are. They were sitting on top of one and the tour guide said, “See those hills over there? Those are all other pyramids we haven’t yet gotten to. They’re just covered totally with overgrowth.” They didn’t even know they were there. They had been there hundreds of years and nobody paid attention to them. It didn’t mean anything to the natives because they just had to survive. Then we begin to live in a culture where we have time; even as much as you don’t think you have time, we have more time than most people throughout history to recreate.

What are these secret places? Those are the things that God has been trying to show us that go unnoticed or get covered up by the busyness of life. They get covered by the world. They get overgrown with the lush forests of society. It doesn’t look like what it was.

He’s given us treasures of darkness. It just means they’re covered in darkness, but it’s a treasure for us. We just never saw it. It’s like that little gray bird; I could never look at it.
Those are the things that God has been trying to show us over and over again. But I think it’s possible to see everything God wants to show us if we can go at it with the attitude of a child; fresh eyes.

Have you ever been working on something and just couldn’t get the problem, couldn’t get the problem and then you close the book or roll out from under the car; you go out the next day and you get it! You get the problem or you’ve got the bolt loose finally. It’s just fresh eyes. That’s sort of the fresh eyes of a child. People just stay so busy; they just keep working on it and can’t get it, can’t get it, can’t get it and get more and more frustrated. Then they make all kinds of excuses why they can’t get it, can’t get it, can’t get it. You can get it. You can get it.

Let’s expect to see what’s been hidden from us through misconception and misperception.

1 Corinthians 2:7 (KJV)

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Here is a mystery that God hid from every man, from every beast, from THE beast, or a spirit, everything. Everything that helped him build what this universe is was there but they couldn’t see it because he hid it from them. They were kept in the dark until Paul thousands and thousands and millions of years later. Dinosaurs came and went and came and went and the cave people; eons of time, continents shifting, volcanoes happening, earth freezing, earth cooling, earth heating up too much, oxygen levels changing, crazy stuff. All that time, nobody knew. Millions and millions and millions of years...

EXAMPLE

This week I read about a new dinosaur recently rediscovered called the Spinosaurus. I learned something new and unexpected as I read into this. I was very into dinosaurs as a kid. Everyone I marked in all the Encyclopedias with a little piece of tissue sticking out. I’d go back and keep looking at these things over and over again. It made me think about things I thought I knew and understood that I really didn’t. I’ll explain.
This was the only dinosaur known to be semiaquatic. This was the only one. There were creatures that swam but they weren’t dinosaurs; they were another species. This thing was 50 feet long and they called it the largest carnivorous dinosaur. It had this sail on its back. You’ve seen lizards with that spiny sail. It could have been 6-7 feet tall. It had a crocodilian snout with these rear-angled, interlocking teeth so it would be hard for a fish to get away. They surmised in the water it would have devoured the T-Rex had it lived a million years earlier. In Jurassic Park movie they had one of these fighting a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

As I studied these things, they talked about certain bones in the dinosaur. They had these air pockets in them. Then the researchers said that the modern day chickens are much like the dinosaurs that walked on two legs, the bipeds. The dinosaurs had hollow bones like chickens and turkeys. I started wondering why that was. I thought it was to make them light so they could fly. I never read that but that’s what I surmised.

Then I realized that as I studying these birds now, because it went from dinosaurs to birds, most birds have what’s called a unidirectional lung. They don’t breathe like we do which I never knew until this week. We breathe in fresh air, then it takes carbon dioxide from our body and we breathe it out. Birds don’t respirate like we do. They have these air sacs all throughout their whole body and in their bones. When they breathe in, it fills these air sacs that are inside of them. The air sacs continuously push a flow of fresh air one way through the lungs. The lungs don’t breathe in the air from the outside; the air bags do. Then those fill and go through the lungs. When they respiration, it just goes right out through their mouth basically. So they never have anything but oxygen or whatever air is in them. So that’s why a bird can fly at 14,000 feet because it will just push in all the air it needs to keep that energy level up. It’s super-charged breathing.
At 14,000 feet a bird can breathe as easily as if it was at sea level because of the bladder system within them. Many dinosaurs were the same way which also means they had incredible endurance because you can run as hard as you can and you’re not going to run out of oxygen. It’s always going to keep pumping as much oxygen as you need through your lungs. That’s why a hummingbird can move like it does or birds can fly so high or for so long; for 9,000 miles. It just keeps pushing that oxygen in through their lungs whereas we begin to wear out.

Don’t you think some of these bike racers would like that? Any endurance athlete today would have everything they need. As much power as they need, it would be there to convert any power you need into energy.

That’s what I learned this week.

So how many other things don’t I know about regular life? Much! It got me thinking...how much don’t I really know about what’s available to me spiritually? How much has other things been obscured from my sight; like that little gray bird that kept staying behind me?

I remember working on a farm once and every time I had to herd these goats into these pens. It was an auction sell barn. So when I would be looking at the goats they would stop standing motionless. But when I turned my back to walk towards the gate I had to get to, I’d turn back around and they were 10 feet closer just standing there. It was like red light-green light. Then if I’d let them get too close, they would butt me, but they would never do it to my face. They would only butt me from the rear, so I’d walk backwards, then turn just in time for them to get into that pen.

There’s so much to know! But it can be as simple to understand as a child can understand. It’s not complex thinking to walk by the spirit. It’s just have the expectation and the pure giving heart of a child – no ulterior motives, no ego, no titles, no filters; I’m just there. I’m here, God; I’m here.

You’ll notice if you can track back every time you really believed for something big, you did that. You got to the place...okay, I’m here; I’m ready. It’s not complex.

Revelation 2:17 (KJV)

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches [group of believers]; To him that overcometh [victorious over his piece of the world] will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*
Hidden manna – what does that represent to you? Manna was perfect food that the children of Israel ate. Hidden manna is what people will get when they claim victory over their lives so to speak; victory over their own personal enemies. It’s perfect fuel. What do you think energizes Jesus Christ now? It’s got to be some perfect fuel if you’ve been alive for 2,000 years. It better be good. What about all the angels? What gives them the energy that they have? Where do they get that? What about the devil spirits? Where do they keep getting energy? Believe it or not, all that energy still comes from God. Isn’t that crazy? That’s how loving God is.

You think you’re too bad to receive from God? God can give some stuff.

White stone—some researchers say this is a diamond. I don’t know how to tell. This is sort of an Israelite reference here. The priest would have a breast plate they would wear. It had 12 stones representing the 12 Tribes of Israel and each stone was a different kind of stone. You can look them up; I didn’t. This white stone could be the yura min thu mon and they would have this little box with a black stone and a white stone that they would use to answer yes and no kind of thing.

This white stone here, it’s either that or it’s a diamond. In that diamond is carved a special name for you. It’s available to know exactly who God says we are. It’s available to know exactly what God says we can have. Not just think it; but to know I’m here. I get it, God. I get it now.

If I could learn something about a bird that I see flying around every day somewhere, or a dinosaur that I loved to study so much as a child, how many other things do I just not see or just don’t notice because we’re too busy, too distracted, too hurt?

Let’s see with the pure vision of a child who has no fear and no preconceived ideas about God and His abundance for us. They’re just there; they exist. Just like God says He exists for us.

This new name helps us realize who we are, what we have, what we can do, it gives our life purpose and meaning. You’re going to have the full understanding of that someday, but we can sure have part of it today! Exceedingly above all that we ask or think...you can have more than you ever believe for.

The world says “perception is reality”.

The Word says that we can see what most others miss.

As we keep our eyes open, we can avoid the blinding traps of society and learn to see with what I call pure perception.

God bless you all.