

Perceiving People

A Colorado native moved to the plains of West Texas. At the same time, a West Texas man moved to the mountains of Colorado.

After a time, both were asked what they thought of their new homes. The man who had moved from Colorado to Texas said, "Well, you can see for miles and miles out here. The only problem is there isn't anything to see."

The man who moved from Texas to Colorado said, "Well the biggest problem is you can't see anything because these mountains are in the way."

Different perception caused different judgments. Perception is especially important when dealing with others. We interpret the actions of others based on the perception we have of them.

As a friend of mine has said, "If you like a man, he can dump his whole bowl of soup on you and it won't matter. If you don't like him, the way he holds his spoon will irritate you."

Read **I Corinthians 13:4-7** and see how love perceives others. *"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"* (ESV).

Did you see the issues of perception with other people? When we love others we will not view them with an envious eye or a conceited one. We will not view people with an eye for what they can do for us. We will not be happy when they do what is wrong but only when they do what is right.

Finally, the big issue of perception is portrayed when Paul said that love "believes all things, hopes all things." Many times, before people even act, we have a story to tell about their intentions. They are trying to put us in our place. They are mean and hateful. They are arrogant and conceited. Love does not tell those stories. Love believes and hopes all things. That is, love gives the benefit of the doubt.

Love assumes the best of others at all times. In how many ways could people misinterpret our intentions? We know we were only trying to be helpful. We know we were only trying to lift up. We did not mean to sound arrogant or critical. We want everyone to give us the benefit of the doubt, perceiving our best intentions, not our mistakes.

Most people, especially Christians, want to do good; they are well-meaning and well-intentioned even if it does not always come out just right. In short, they are like you and me. Let's work to give each other the benefit of the doubt, perceiving the best intentions not the worst mistakes.

Edwin L. Crozier