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A Matter of Perspective

A story will change on account of the storyteller. This is an unavoidable truth, for it is up to the person telling the story to determine the best way to communicate it. Every nuance will adapt as the story gets told and retold. In order to tell a compelling story, the storyteller must consider the perspective from which the story shall unfold. Shall the perspective be omniscient, or limited? Should it be told in the present, as though it is currently happening, or the past? What if it is through the eyes of a character involved? Choosing that character will have a determining role in communicating the themes, feelings, and details of a story. If done well, a seemingly mundane story can be revitalized, now exciting and engaging, simply by changing the perspective.

Of all the moviemakers who have taken on the task of storytelling from a unique perspective, one stands out as consistently producing films that are imaginative and profoundly compelling. Pixar Animation Studios has released seventeen feature films, each one of them taking a common, perhaps uninteresting theme, and making it brand new through a new perspective. Consider Pixar's first film, *Toy Story*. From the perspective of the boy, Andy, the story is simply that he received an action figure for his birthday, then lost that and his other favorite toy, only to find them again days later. But, when told from a new perspective, the story becomes so much more. For the toys, the journey of reuniting with Andy was the adventure of a lifetime. Along the way, they had to overcome their differences in order to work together and find friendship, they had to confront their own perceptions of reality and identity, and they discovered what it means to truly belong. *Toy Story* shall be forever remembered for its ingenuity, but Pixar has continually met the challenge of telling stories just as creative as their

first film. For example, it is far too common to encounter a child who fears the monster in their closet, but what if that same situation is seen through the eyes of the monster, such as in *Monsters, Inc.*? Additionally, almost every child knows the struggles of adjusting to a family move, but *Inside Out* captivates the audience by telling that story through the child's emotions. And nearly all of us have enjoyed peering into a fish tank and admiring the creatures inside, but *Finding Nemo* was the first to consider the perspective of what it may look like from the fish as they look out. None of these stories are new concepts. In fact, many of these stories may appear rather boring from our point of view. But, it is the mere shift in perspective that allows these stories to be profound, funny, and innovative in ways that the audience may have never before experienced.

I have enjoyed Pixar films my entire life, and thus their creative storytelling techniques have continually shaped and expanded my worldview. As my spirituality deepens, I find myself constantly making connections and utilizing the same techniques in my understanding of faith. When reading a Bible passage, for example, it is important to ask questions such as who is telling this story? To whom is it being told? Why may certain details be emphasized, or omitted, and what difference does it make? Pixar films teach even the youngest people that the perspective of the story can make all the difference. In order to get as close to the objective truth as possible, one must seek out many perspectives of the same situation. Experiencing these multiple perspectives will allow each individual to grow in empathy, understanding, open-mindedness, and it gives each of us the opportunity to think critically about each situation and form our own opinions. Whether or not the understanding one seeks is a spiritual matter, Pixar films remind us all of the need to broaden our horizons, and see the world from a new perspective.