



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, *He Said - She Said* is a venue to share differing perspectives.

Reframing the Picture

Bob's Perspective:

One of my favorite places to visit is the Cleveland Museum of Art. Every time I need to get on a creative track, whether it's writing a blog or arranging music, landing myself in the midst of great works of art usually gets things moving in the right direction.

Much can be learned from visiting this fine institution. For example, the Baroque and Renaissance galleries are filled with paintings and artifacts that give real insight into the development of Christianity in Europe. There are galleries that display ancient Egyptian artifacts, and Middle Eastern and Oriental galleries with fine statuary and textile art, as well. Every time I visit the museum, I learn something interesting, whether religious, historic, aesthetic, or social.

On a recent visit, I perused an area that I don't visit very often. I found myself wandering through the Modern Art galleries. It's not that I don't like modern art, it's fine... I'm just not that into it... or, so I thought. As I made my way through the exhibits, I happened upon a wall with various photographs. Some of them were quite good, others were... suffice it to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder (I suppose). These particular photographs were set in various styled frames, some very plain and others very ornate. As I was looking at them, my eye kept being drawn to a particular photograph at the end of the row – set in a skillfully crafted, modestly designed, moderately ornate frame. Although I took my time in working my way down the wall, I felt some anticipation building as I got closer to the destination of that particular work. When I finally got to the beautifully framed photograph, I gazed upon it and blurted out, “What the hell is that?”

It was the one of most atrocious-looking things I've ever seen (and I'm being kind). I hastily looked at the title, hopeful for some insight, definition, or clarification. The photograph was called, “Untitled.” In my opinion, that was about the most charitable thing anyone could have said about it. Given the anticipation that I had built up in myself, I exited the gallery feeling a bit let down and somewhat disappointed – which was the exact opposite of the intended result of my safari.

At that point, I felt that I had experienced enough culture for one day. So, leaving the museum, I crossed the street to a beautiful park called Wade Oval. There I happened upon a weenie vendor who masterfully prepared a true work of art! The sheer act of indulging in a footlong hotdog (with the works), a bag of Fritos, and a Diet Coke soon returned balance to my fragile little universe.



As I gorged upon the vendor's product, I began to ponder. Although from one point of view the photograph was hideous, from another perspective, looking at it from a distance – especially with the way it was framed – there was something quite attractive and aesthetically pleasing about it. Maybe there's a lesson here. I don't know if the artist framed the picture, or if the curator of the exhibit was responsible for the enhancement. In any case, the frame changed the presentation of the photograph, making it much more aesthetically pleasing (at least from a distance). In other words, the picture itself couldn't be fixed but framing it made the presentation better. In the same way, when I "reframed" my experience of the "Untitled" masterpiece by a simple change of scenery and partaking of a culinary delight, the whole situation turned from being somewhat disappointing to almost humorous.

Like the aforementioned photographic masterpiece, sometimes we find ourselves in a situation that may not have an easy fix. It might be of a personal nature, or a relationship, or maybe a work situation. When we make the effort to reframe the picture and look at it from a little distance, we begin to gain a new perspective and a change in our attitude. When attitudes and perspectives change for the better, it's easier to recognize a welcomed and sometimes unexpected way to deal with or even resolve the situation at hand.

Mary's Perspective:

I have a lovely friend who retired young and lives a dynamic life. She makes the most of her time, playing pickle ball, attending community events, volunteering in a variety of charitable organizations, and the like. One morning, she excused herself from our conversation by saying, "I get to go pack sandwiches for St. Vincent de Paul now," and happily went on her way. Her positivity and enthusiasm were palpable and contagious. I would imagine that making several hundred peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the homeless has potential to be a wearisome job after a while, but when approached in the mindset that it is a fun opportunity, it *becomes* a fun opportunity. All this because she said, "I get to" instead of "I have to" and smiled on her way.

How many times have we groaned, "oh, I have to go to work now..." or dragged ourselves to the grocery store feeling unappreciated by our fellow home-dwellers, or grumped about having to spend time with one of the people in our friend circle? The simple exchange of "get to" instead of "have to" – reframing the situation – has the ability to change our mindset.



In another example, I have a daughter who has recently started taking college classes, and we went shopping. We were looking for some good walking shoes (to get around campus) and perhaps cute outfits to start this new adventure. We agreed ahead of time that sizes are just numbers or letters, and each manufacturer has their own interpretation of what a specific size means. Rather than worry about the number, we would try it on and see if we liked it. We also agreed that trying something on doesn't mean you're going to buy it, and it never hurts to explore new styles, even if they're not what you have gravitated toward in the past. We reframed our mindset before we even set foot in a store. Starting with a positive attitude, being able to laugh at things that just didn't look right, and being open to new styles transformed what could have been a tedious day into a fun experience.

We all know someone (or perhaps are the one) who has made a job change and found the process to be a mixture of exciting and disappointing. When you've prayerfully discerned the decision to take on the new endeavor, invited the Holy Spirit and family and friends into the decision-making process, and, once the new employment is settled, clearly feel the move is "right," there is a sense of peace. But when the time draws closer to physically making the move, and your replacement has been hired, and your former employer is making what you perceive to be decisions that are detrimental to the healthy growth of the organization, it's easy to get soured to the whole process – to feel regret, remorse, and even anger. This is a good opportunity to reframe the situation. Rather than being mad at the stupidity of people you once respected, perhaps you can offer gentle guidance from a different perspective. You might consider the possibility that they need to grow in a new way, and you being out of the picture enables them to take necessary steps, even if the first few steps are a bit shaky. In addition, your new job presents a whole new crew of people for whom you can have a positive impact. Does it change the logistics of the job change? No. But reframing can help you see a different perspective. We don't always know the entire picture, and sometimes we are part of God's process of helping others on their journey.

Sometimes life hands you lemons. Making lemonade is another way of reframing the situation. Frustrated that your coworkers aren't as committed as you'd like? Perhaps they are expressing their value of quality time with their family. Feel like you are surrounded by dumb people? Maybe God has put them in your life so that you can offer a tangible impact in helping educate, form, and guide them. Annoyed that supply chain issues have impacted the availability of your favorite coffee creamer? Perhaps the empty spot on the shelf is the nudge you needed to try a new brand, flavor, or drink option.



Does reframing always make a situation better? Maybe not. Lemonade can still be sour. But with the sweetness of a positive attitude, it may become more palatable.

Do I think a hot dog and Diet Coke are accurately described as a culinary delight? Pretty sure you can figure out the answer to that one!