

**The Ag Progress *Dispatch* - March 2020  
Seeing Differently**

Learning how to see failure in a different light, or viewing one's injury as an opportunity, or, theologically speaking, seeing one's "darkness" as "light," is the focus of this month's Dispatch. Experts often use the word "reframing" to describe the process of seeing things differently. Lance, Davon and Bill all weigh in on how learning to see life differently, even when difficult, is the gateway to opportunity.

---

**Seeing Family Business Failures from a Different Angle**

By Lance Woodbury

Owning and operating a family-owned agriculture business is not easy. Working with siblings and parents, finding and managing a labor force, maintaining vendor and lender relationships, making marketing decisions, and trying to pass on the management of the business offers plenty of opportunities to feel like you are failing.

One way out of feeling like a failure is to see the positive aspects of your situation. Substituting the word "change" in place of "failure" is a good way to start looking for the benefits:

1. Economic ~~failure~~ change leading to better business understanding. I've heard family business members tell me that losing money, customers or landowners taught them to analyze their business in a much deeper way, leading to an improved business model and future success.
2. Health ~~failure~~ change leading to quality relationships. I've known people whose loss of health has taught them, and their family, the importance of relationships. They found a new appreciation for the quality time spent with their spouse, parents or kids.
3. Role ~~failure~~ change leading to new skills and opportunities. Family members take on many roles in a family business, and we often expect them to play every part well. When they fail and a change is needed, focusing on learning new skills and pursuing new opportunities can equip them not only for greater



levels of future success, but also for a newfound enjoyment of other activities or disciplines.

Abraham Lincoln, who had [no shortage of failures](#), said “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” The word “failure” focuses on the past, while “change” points toward the future, and with a change in mindset you can reframe almost any situation for the better.

---

## **Seeing the World from a Different Angle**

By Davon Cook

I travel a lot, and I move at a fast pace. I walk briskly through the airport. I leave home 50 miles away and arrive at the gate 10 minutes before boarding starts (come on, that’s 10 whole minutes for ‘just in case!’). I seldom check bags so I can arrive home 15 minutes earlier. Until...I recently sprained my ankle (in a home accident that has led many to say, “You need to make up a better story”).

When I next traveled, I used the airport wheelchair service to cover the long distances to the gate. Seeing the airport from that angle provided plenty of opportunity for reflection on my experience.

First, the kindness. From the polite care of the wheelchair escorts to the strangers helping me on the plane, I noticed the good side of humanity more when in a place to need it.

Second, the franticness. Sitting in the wheelchair three feet below most people as we threaded our way through the crowded airport train and TSA, I was overtaken in the rush to exit. I observed my escort’s agile navigation as others unintentionally cut us off. I had that aha moment of, “Do I do that?” I hope not, but I probably do unintentionally.

Third, the value of slowing down. It was kind of refreshing to get there early and know I could dawdle. I took a few deep breaths and just looked around. I chatted with the escort. I visited with the people in line. And after I got home, I asked my friend who’s been ill if my wheelchair driving was too bumpy for her!

I leave this experience with resolutions to watch out for those around me and intentionally to choose times for a slower pace in my own life. I am also wondering: in what other situations would I be well served to change the ‘angle’ from which I see the world? However, if my husband is reading this, no, we are not arriving at the airport two hours early from here forward!



## Seeing Faith from a Different Angle

By Dr. Bill Long

“Even the darkness is not dark to you” (Psalm 139:12)

Davon speaks powerfully and convincingly of an experience in her life where she was forced to slow down and see the world from a different perspective. Fortunately, because of her self-and other-awareness, her experience was enriching rather than frustrating.

Her experience is far from unique. An unexpected injury, financial reversal, loss of an intimate partner or child, or other destabilizing event can turn a confident and capable person into a fearful and tentative person. One of the first things tested is one’s faith. How can I maintain faith, or do I even *want* to maintain faith, when some of the core connections defining my life have been frayed or severed?

The authors of the Psalms often wrestled with these questions. National trauma, and personal distress, are ever-present in the Psalms. One word used over-and-over in the Psalms is “darkness.” Israel’s bleakest Psalm, Psalm 88, even ended with the thought that “darkness” was his “closest friend.” Darkness is the force that threatens to eliminate the light of God’s presence; the light of God’s countenance.

So, it is striking to me that in the midst of reflections on darkness, a common experience in life, that the Psalmist is able to redefine faith in terms of light. He says in Psalm 139:11-12,

If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,’ even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

At the heart of Biblical faith is a belief in a God who redefines faith and reinterprets human experience. What we thought was *darkness* is really *light* to God. What Davon at first thought was a *disability* was really an *opportunity* to broaden her heart and understanding. The next time that the threats of meaninglessness or despair come upon you, remember this Psalm. God redefines darkness into light—and will no doubt be there to do that for you, too.

