

Have You Seen What We've Seen? (Observation 2)

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

In this Teaching Email we'll start by focusing on our God, ***THE one and only God Who created everything*** both seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16). Sadly, many Christians diminish their own faith walk as well as bring down the holy and mighty reputation of the One True God by living as though this biblical certainty about Him is just an **inessential and abstract biblical concept**. In the next email, Observation 3, we'll delve into how this *minimized view of God* has played such a large part in three particular areas: •an almost universal absence of a holy fear of God; •the widespread toleration for sin among Christians in the US; and •a wholesale disregard for where those they care about end up in eternity.

But for now, if you are *genuinely* born again and have within you the Spirit of our Lord, we want to spur you on to firmly grasp some aspects which our God has revealed about Himself. We hope this will encourage you in *fulfilling your personal responsibilities to our God that are appropriate for His children who treasure and appreciate Him for Who He is.*

Let's consider first of all our one true God's own view of Himself: ***"I AM WHO I AM"*** (Exodus 3:14). Who except the true God of all that is can say this about Himself? His eternal existence, His sovereignty over everything, His all-knowing nature, His holiness and justice as well as His love, forgiveness and compassion — these are just a few traits that describe **He Who is Infinite**. The totality of Who the one true God is goes way beyond words! But please absorb through your spirit three biblical and undeniable facts which reveal particular aspects about Him:

- ✓ Our God has revealed His divine nature, first and foremost, through our Lord Jesus:
 - “*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn over all creation*” (Colossians 1:15).
 - “*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form*” (Colossians 2:9).
 - “*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in [Jesus] and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross*” (Colossians 1:19,20).

- ✓ Our God has revealed Himself in His creation:
 - “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1).
 - “*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse*” (Romans 1:20). (In light of the eternal power of our God, you might enjoy listening to the praise song, *Ah Lord God* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOh7nyujT_0>)

- ✓ Our God has revealed still another characteristic of Himself through creating mankind:
 - “*Let us make humankind in Our image, in the likeness of Ourselves*” (Genesis 1:26).

In light of God creating us humans, consider both His grace and His long-suffering nature in dealing with humanity. In creating us *in His image* we were endowed with the capacity to know Him. That certainly set us apart from the rest of creation. And with that capacity He was willing to give us free will – **free will to love and serve Him in trust-motivated obedience**. Yet on the flip side, we were also given **free will to sin against Him**. Mankind has universally chosen sin from the beginning! (Romans 3:23) Adam and Eve personally interacted with God yet still sinned against Him through their disobedience. Their firstborn son, Cain, subsequently murdered his brother Abel. By Genesis 6 God voiced His regret for having created mankind:

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Genesis 6:5,6).

It’s really amazing in itself that our holy God didn’t just do away with mankind since that was fully within His divine power. He did chastise us by displaying His awesome power in sending a worldwide flood which destroyed all of humanity except for Noah and seven others. But He was also well aware that we were “*dust*” (Psalm 103:13,14). So God revealed His compassion and willingness to forgive us, with over 300 prophecies in the Older Testament foretelling the coming of the Redeemer, Jesus. And **WOW!** Through trusting in Jesus we are no longer just His human creation, but we now enjoy a much deeper, intimate relationship: **the children of a heavenly Father and indwelled by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus:**

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him...And this is His command: to trust in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us. The one who keeps God’s commands lives in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us” (1John 3:1,23,24).

“Love has been perfected among us in this: in order that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as Jesus is, so are we in this world” (1John 4:17).

Our Father’s aim is that, while they live on earth, the *genuinely* born again will resolutely seek to become like our Lord Jesus in this world. And our Father’s means to help us is transforming us by His Spirit, even through suffering. In today’s self-addicted, pleasure-bent Christianity, this biblical truth about suffering is ignored, neglected or even denied. But what is God’s perspective on suffering?

• *“To this you were called, **because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps**. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly” (1Peter 2:21,23).*

It's to the *genuinely* born again that Paul declares the crux of our transformation:

• “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2; see also 2Corinthians 3:18).

• “...**we also glory in our sufferings**, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance**; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

• “I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already received this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Philippians 3:10-12).

“So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

“He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them ‘Mankind’ in the day they were created” (Genesis 5:2).

We haven't been left alone in our ongoing transformation process. Besides His indwelling Spirit, our God intends for other human beings to help us in our transformation. For example, He intentionally created the two genders to be uniquely different so that we would need each other's perspective. We discuss some of the key differences in Lesson 44 of *Discussing How To Restore the Early Church, Respecting Gender Differences* <<https://restorationministries.org/download/44.lesson44.pdf>>.

But we also are influenced to change through others of our own gender as well. Men in particular are helped in their transformation by other men in two specific ways:

1. **Role-models**. A man is deeply influenced by the sacrificial choices he knows have been made by other men in his life, especially older men. In response to their lives, he seeks to become like them.
2. **Confrontation**. Men who haven't become effeminized through a lack of righteous men in their life more readily accept corrective intervention that helps them change. A man may need his feelings to be hurt in order to get him to stop and consider the lack of biblical wisdom in his own point of view or decisions. Is it any wonder that Paul tells men, “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are working hard among you, those who are guiding you in the Lord and confronting you in order to help you change” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, CJB)?

A male is *not* transformed by **education** (and this includes preaching). Transmission of information only adds to his knowledge and makes him more prideful (1Corinthians 8:1). However, *discussion* of what he's taught in conjunction with role-modeling and confrontation can aid in life-changing transformation into increasing Christ-likeness.

Females, on the other hand, are different in what helps them in their transformation process. They benefit from:

1. **Role-modeling**, especially by godly older women (see Titus 2:3-5).
2. **Education** (preaching included) since women are more likely to read or hear something they think is helpful to them and then put it into action.
3. **Confrontation** (but to a much lesser extent since women often react to *how* something is said rather than to *what's* being said.)

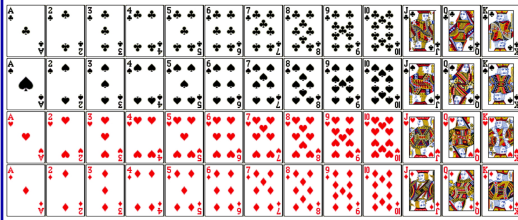
In being transformed, are you seeking all the cards our Lord offers you?

We know you've most likely seen the news about medical personnel now having to again risk their lives to help people who have contracted Covid. Most of these new cases refused to get the vaccine which could have prevented or at least greatly lessened the virus's effects. Think of the insensitive stupidity which our caring and sacrificial medical personnel are encountering in the senseless suffering and death of people who could have forestalled their illness (and their ongoing contagion) yet rejected the free solution.

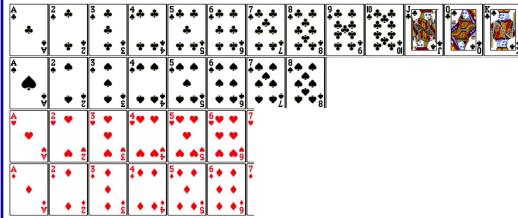
We're disheartened as we see the same level of irresponsibility among many Christians in the US. The majority have told our Lord, "**This far and no more.**" Please see the illustration on the next page which describes people who only want a few of the "cards of transformation" our Lord offers. And some words of encouragement for those of you who want every card our Lord offers: "*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen*" (1Timothy 1:17).

Mike & Sue

Please continue to remember us in your prayers, and also our friends Ron and Nicki who are still awaiting the sale of some property in the US to fund the ministry work and orphanage in Ecuador (Acts 2:45). They also need a reliable and honest accountant and administrator there.

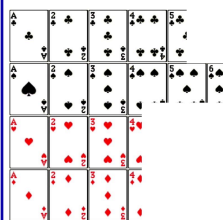
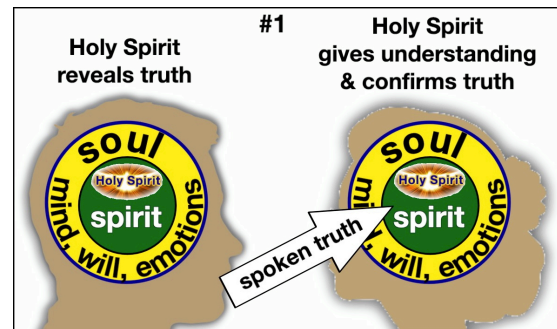


Picture that our Lord has 52 cards of transformation into His likeness that He wants His followers to pursue. We know that His Spirit works internally through our spirit to transform us into His character so that we can more clearly represent Him to others: “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit” (2Corinthians 3:18; see also Romans 12:2).



We’ve found it easy to help and encourage people we’ve met in our ministry who are resolutely determined in pursuing all 52 cards of transformation. They may not have all the cards, but *they are resolutely pursuing transformation in ever-increasing Christ-likeness.*

The goal of resolutely pursuing Christ-like character development starts with asking the indwelling Spirit of our Lord for help. The Holy Spirit within you is the inner source of your transformation. And it’s His inner presence that enables you to hear truths you need to hear from others whom the Spirit uses to aid you in your transformation. This is akin to illustration #1 which we’ve used in previous Teaching Emails.



But within much of Christianity in this nation are many who study the Bible and are even inspired by it, BUT there’s no real resolute determination to keep being transformed. They *aren’t* seeking to be the best representative of Jesus to the people around them. In fact, whether consciously or subconsciously most have said to the Lord, **“This far and no more!”** These people live with a partial deck because they are tolerating sin which they refuse to give up.

People who refuse to seek any more cards of transformation or who misread the suffering our heavenly Father often uses to accomplish this are like illustration #3. It depicts those without the Holy Spirit, or those who refuse to listen to Him and/or those He sends to help in their transformation. We’ve been of little help to people who hold onto too few cards with desire no more. They are the God-denying, the Hardened and the Mocking Fools the Bible warns against. If the Holy Spirit is abiding within you, please don’t refuse to listen to Him or to those He sends, saying in your rebellion, **“This far and no more!”**

