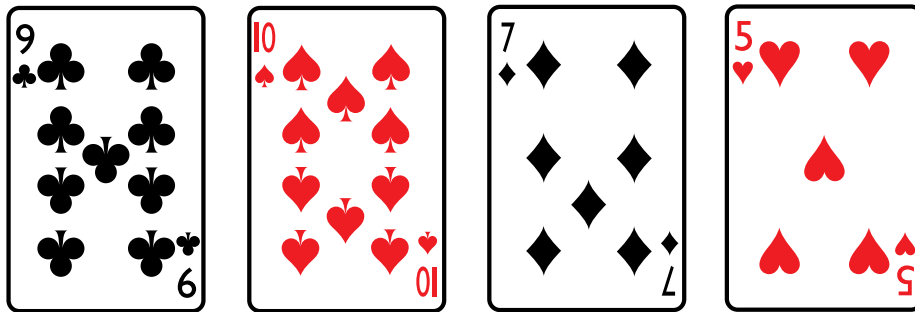


What's wrong with this picture?



You carry perceptions into daily experience that cloud your sight. Some people call these preconceived notions "paradigms." If you filter everything you see through your preconceived notions, you can miss the truth. You are so used to red diamonds and black spades, that these cards may not look wrong. Or...you may see them, know there is something unusual, but not be able to put your finger on it.

STORY:

A sculptor, resting from his day's work, fell asleep one afternoon and dreamed he was the block of stone he was carving. He was aware of himself, inside the stone block, yearning to be released. Yet when the sculptor in his dream began to hammer away, he found the stone too hard. The dream sculptor's chisels broke. His hammer handles splintered. Finally, the dream sculptor gave up working on the block. "This is the most stubborn block of stone I ever encountered," said the dream sculptor. "If there is a statue inside this block, it will just have to stay there!"

The real sculptor woke up in a cold sweat. In his day-to-day work he envisioned each block of stone to contain a statue yearning to get out. As an artist, he saw it as his mission to chip away the excess stone and free that image so others could see it. "The worst thing in the world would be like my dream—a man trapped inside stone so hard that no artist could release him."

Some people in the church are like the hard stone. God is a sculptor who desires to work with our lives. Hard people resist the Sculptor's work. They see God's work as "chipping away at my life," as "reducing my resources." They don't recognize that God wants to free a beautiful image from the stone—one that can emerge only as parts of the outside block are chipped away.

As a child of God, inside of you is a person capable of managing what God gives. The problem is in the perception that God wants you to give up something to be a steward. Nothing is further from the truth. God wants to GIVE you something (actually, many things) as His manager.

STORY:

A mother had 15 children. One of the only ways to know if they were all accounted for was to count them each night at dinner. One summer day she counted only 14. She went out into the neighborhood and found her eight-year-old son just where she expected—at a local construction site. He had gotten into a bucket of tar and was covered from head to foot. She sized him up and said to him, "It would be easier to have another one than to clean you up!"

We, too, are covered with the tar of sin. God could find it easy to say to us, as he told Moses about the Israelites (Ex. 32:7-10), "It would be easier to wipe you out and start over than to clean you up." But that's not what God did.

You may not presently be a good manager of what God entrusts to you. But God is willing to work with you, rather than walk away. That's called God's grace. In Christ, He's ready.

EXERCISE:

While you are driving this week, take this thought along with you:

Whether you are on an expressway or a side street, you will be making exits and turns today. If you make the wrong turn or take the wrong exit, you may have to travel on the wrong road for some distance before you can correct your mistake.

In life, making a wrong turn can also get you onto a wrong road that will take some time to correct.

But God helps you prevent wrong turns in life with the internal guidance of the Holy Spirit. Through His word, He maps out for you the right road.

In prayer, ask God to show you today the ways that He will be directing your life in where to turn, how long to keep going and taking the proper exit.

Managing all of life and God's resources are always easier with His direction.

PRAY Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-11: ...That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ....

For more details on paradigms and perceptions, check out Joel Barker's resources at <http://www.lspublishing.com/Joel.html>

STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES - PRINCIPLE ONE

God's stewards are GOD'S stewards. God's stewards are stewards by virtue of their creation and their re-creation in Holy Baptism; therefore, they belong to the Lord. See Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 43:1-31; Romans 6:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Ephesians 2:8-10. God makes us His stewards and we remind each other that we are His new creation each day. The Lord is the source of all stewardship, which includes all areas of life.

*This site is maintained through the Board for Congregational Services,
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