

FLESH vs. SPIRIT

Have you ever wondered why you are not as good a Christian as you know you ought to be? Have you ever been deeply disappointed with something you have done since you have been saved? "I cannot believe I said or did that." Others have faced the same dilemma. When D. L. Moody was asked what his greatest problem was, he replied, "The man I see in the mirror each morning."

THE CHANGE AT SALVATION

When you got saved, the old sinful nature you had did not die. It is still there. The Bible calls it the flesh, old man, and the carnal (worldly) mind. **When you got saved, your spirit became alive and functional.** An unsaved man walks after the flesh - his spirit is dead. (Ephesians 2:1) **A Christian has both the fleshly and the spiritual natures.** That is where your battle comes in. Notice all the Scriptures that mention these two natures inside of you:

Matthew 26:41: *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Romans 7:14-25: *"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."*

Romans 8:5-7: *"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."*

Romans 13:14: *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."*

Galatians 5:17-19: *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,"*

Galatians 6:8: *"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*

AN OLD TESTAMENT ANALOGY

In Galatians 4, the account is repeated of how Abraham had two sons - one by his wife Sarah and one by the handmaid, Hagar. The son born to Hagar was named Ishmael and was born first. He represents the flesh born in sin and bondage. Isaac was the second son (13 years later) who represents the Spirit.

ABRAHAM

HAGAR (Bondage)	SARAH (Free)
ISHMAEL (Flesh)	ISAAC (Spirit)
BORN 1 st	BORN 2 nd

Ishmael mocked and ridiculed Isaac until he and his mother had to leave. The flesh has been around longer than our Spirit and is often stronger. Ishmael was 13 when Isaac was born and obviously was the stronger of the two. **How old is your flesh? How old is your Spirit?** Do you see why there is a battle? The flesh does not want to give up control. In John, Chapter 3, Jesus emphasized to Nicodemus the **importance of being born again**. When there are two leaders in one house, there will be trouble. The flesh says, "I was here first!" The Spirit says, "But the control is rightfully mine!"

CHARACTERISTICS

FLESH
(OLD MAN, NATURAL MAN)

- * Does works of FLESH
- * Does what comes natural

SPIRIT
(NEW MAN)

- * Has fruit of SPIRIT
- * Does what Jesus would do!

FLESH

Galatians 5:19-21 says: *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."*

SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23 says: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

An unsaved person can sin and enjoy it. A saved man is miserable after he sins. He has a new man living inside - **a new nature that wants to please God**.

You can wash and perfume a pig and he will walk right back into the hog pen to wallow in the mud. You can take a sheep and throw it into the mud and he will quickly get out. Their natures are different. The

spiritual nature and the fleshly nature are opposites. A lost man can enjoy sin and not want to stop, **while a saved man is miserable when in sin.**

A CHRISTIAN'S DUTY

Romans 8:14 says: *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."*

A Christian cannot do the works of the flesh and have the fruit of the Spirit at the same time. We are commanded to fight the flesh so victory can be in our lives.

I Peter 2:11 says: *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;"*

The fight is over the soul (emotions, thoughts, and decisions). The flesh and Spirit both want to control the soul. The one who controls the soul controls the body.

WHEN IS THE FIGHT THE HARDEST?

The flesh fights hardest when there is a decision to make. A decision to get saved, be faithful in church, tithe, win souls, get right with God, etc.

THREE CHRISTIAN SITUATIONS:

SPIRIT-Flesh

VICTORIOUS
CHRISTIAN
(When spirit is
stronger than the
flesh)

It is evident to
everyone this
person is saved.

Spirit-Flesh

COMPROMISING
CHRISTIAN
(Some victories
and some defeats)

The spirit and flesh
are about the same
strength. This
Christian confuses
the lost. He is
wishy washy,
unstable, and
inconsistent.

Spirit-FLESH

BACKSLIDDEN
CHRISTIAN
(No victories)

The flesh is
stronger than the
spirit. No one can
tell this Christian is
saved.

WARNING: THE GRADUAL VICTORY OF THE FLESH

There is a downward progression a Christian can make if he is not careful. The flesh is subtle and deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9).

Step 1

Doing spiritual activities in the energy of the spirit. (Yielded to the Holy Spirit and begging God to use you.)

Step 2

Doing spiritual activities in the energy of the flesh. (Slacking off and coasting in the walk with God - depending on talent.)

Step 3

Doing fleshly activities. (Evil you never imagined you would do.)

Often you will hear, "Did you hear of so-in-so falling into sin?" No one ever sees any one "fall into sin". You only see them when they land. They have been falling for a long time. **Are you totally yielding all of your activities to God?** "I can get by. I have taught that Sunday School lesson before. I do not need to pray or study it." That is the energy of the flesh. It is one step away from wicked sin. **Are you as dependent upon God as you once were?**

WHEN IS THE FLESH THE WEAKEST?

LATE AT NIGHT

Proverbs 7:9 says: *"In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:"* Be careful about being out late in the evening. Your resistance is lower.

WHEN HUNGRY

The devil tempted Jesus' flesh after 40 days of fasting. Tempers flare and unkind words can be said when hungry. **Do battle with the flesh.** Remember that Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage.

WHEN OUT OF SCHEDULE

II Samuel, Chapter 11, gives the account of David committing adultery when he was supposed to be in battle. **Keep your guard up during vacation, holidays, and summertime.**

WHEN TIRED

I Kings, Chapter 19, gives the account of Elijah resigning the ministry because he was weary. **Do not make major decisions when tired.**

HOW TO WIN BATTLES OVER THE FLESH

DO BATTLE DAILY

Paul said, "I die daily." Begin each day declaring war on the flesh!

USE ONLY SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal..." (II Corinthians 10:4) says the Scriptures. Exercise your spiritual senses. Bury yourself with spiritual activities: prayer, Bible, soulwinning, giving, fasting, helping needy people, visiting hospitals, working around the church, writing encouraging letters, teaching Sunday School, driving a church bus, etc. In health clubs they say, **"No Pain - No Strain - No Gain!"** Exercise your spiritual senses. **You must be in shape to defeat the flesh. The more you fight, the quicker you grow!**

BATHE YOURSELF IN SCRIPTURE

That is where your strength will be. A missionary was speaking to an Indian who had become a Christian. The Indian told how he was having a battle in his heart like having a white and black bulldog fighting. "Who wins?" asked the missionary. "The one I feed the most", replied the Indian. **Feed your spirit with Scripture.**

WHEN WILL THE FIGHT END?

I Cor. 15:51 says: *"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,"* God has a glorified body (that will not ever sin) for all Christians.

WHAT A DAY THAT WILL BE!

NAME: _____

REVIEW FLESH vs. SPIRIT - STEP 10

1. Does the old sinful nature die when someone becomes a christian? _____
2. What became alive when you got saved? _____
3. What major difference is there in a saved and unsaved person?

4. Write one sentence in Scripture that speaks of the flesh and spirit.

5. What Old Testament story gives the illustration of the battle between the flesh and spirit? _____
6. How old is your flesh? _____
7. How old is your spirit? _____
8. Give another name for the flesh _____
9. Give the reference in Scripture where the works of the flesh are named. _____
10. Where in the Scripture is the fruit of the spirit named? _____
11. The flesh does what comes: _____
12. The spirit does what? _____
13. What animal is an unsaved person's nature like? _____
14. What animal is a saved person's nature like? _____
15. What part of a person does the flesh and spirit fight over? _____
16. When does the flesh fight hardest? When there is a _____

17. List the three Christian situations a Christian may be in:

18. Describe each: _____

19. Explain in your own words "the gradual victory of the flesh". _____

20. List four times when the flesh is the weakest:
