



Introduction

Every day we struggle against three things that conspire to push us away from truth. Understanding how the world, the flesh and the devil work will enable us to renew our minds and stand firm.

SESSION 5: Our Daily Choice

Focus verse: *You, however, are controlled not by the flesh but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. (Romans 8:9)*

Objective: To understand that, although we still have urges that tend to pull us away from relying completely on God and following the promptings of the Spirit, we no longer have to give in to them but are free to choose.

Focus Truth:

Although you are a new person in Christ with a completely new nature, and are free to live according to what the Holy Spirit tells you, obeying Him is not automatic.

"We have choice every day whether to walk according to God's Spirit or according to 'the flesh'."

When we became a Christian...

Did we think it would be like flicking a switch & we would automatically do everything right? We soon find out that it doesn't work like this. Our struggle with sin sometimes seems to get worse.

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What DID Happen

*** We have a new heart and a new Spirit within us**
Re-orientation. (Compare *Jeremiah 17:9* with *Ezekiel 36.26*)

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*** We have new life "in Christ"**

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*** We have a new master**

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What DID NOT Happen

*** Our body did not change**

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*** Our 'flesh' was not taken away**

As we grew up, independently of God, we learned to react/cope/think independently of God - primary characteristics of the 'flesh'. When we came to Christ these were not automatically replaced with good ways of thinking/reacting. Instead the New Testament is clear that we have to train ourselves to think in a

way that is in accordance with what is actually true, rather than in accordance with past experiences/habits - process of 'renewing our minds' (*Romans 12: 2*)
(N.B. Newer Bible translations have "sinful nature" instead of "flesh". This does not mean we have a sinful nature. See *Ephesians 1:3* & *2 Peter 1:4*)

Notes

* Sin did not die

"Sin tempts us every day to meet the legitimate needs that we have for significance, security and acceptance, through things other than God."

* Key to defeating sin: knowing the truth.

'Alive to God and dead to sin' (*Romans 6:11*) But be aware of 'the law of sin' (*Romans 7:21, 23*)

Notes

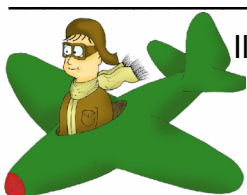


Illustration: Law of gravity overcome by the law of aerodynamics and the power of the engine. A law that is still effective is overcome by a greater law. **See *Romans 8:2***

Notes

Our Choices

* Even though we no longer have to think and react according to our flesh, we can **choose** to do so

* Even though sin has no power over us, we can **choose** to give in to it

Notes

See *1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3*



The Natural Person

- * Physically alive but spiritually dead
- * Separated from God
- * Living independently from God
- * Lives in the flesh; actions and choices dictated by the flesh
- * Has no spiritual basis for coping with life's stresses

Notes



The Spiritual Person (Normal state for a Christian)

- * Transformed through faith in Christ
 - * Spirit united with God's Spirit
 - * Has received
 - Forgiveness
 - Acceptance into God's family
 - Realisation of worth in Christ
 - * Receives impetus from God's Spirit instead of the flesh
 - * Is renewing the mind
 - * Has emotions marked by peace and joy instead of turmoil
 - * Chooses to walk in the Spirit
 - * Crucifies the flesh daily
- 2 Peter 1:3** We already have the equipment to live this way!

Notes _____



The Fleshly Person

- * Mind occupied by wrong thoughts
- * Negative emotions
- * Body showing signs of stress
- * Feelings of inferiority, insecurity, inadequacy, guilt, worry and doubt

Tends to mimic the natural person

Get stuck in certain sins. (See *Romans 7:15-24*)

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"The salvation of the fleshly Christian is not in doubt. But he accomplishes nothing much of eternal value in such a state - a tragedy when in due course he stands before God and looks back at what might have been."

Barriers To Growth

God has given us everything we need to live a life that pleases Him (*2 Peter 1:3*). We don't need someone special to 'zap' us or pray the 'right' prayer - we simply need to learn to use what we already have to deal with the barriers to growth in our lives. e.g.

* Ignorance

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* Deception

Colossians 6:2-7 We are either growing in the Lord or taken captive by some deceptive way of thinking
e.g. It might work for others but it won't work for me
I could never have faith like him/her
God could never use me

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* Unresolved personal and spiritual conflicts

Illustration: the trapped toggle. Doors open to the enemy holds us back; never put truth into practice.
e.g. Never truly forgiven someone. Truth is true but we have to make it real within us.

Notes _____



A Genuine Choice

When we have committed ourselves to believe truth no matter what we feel, and dealt with our unresolved spiritual conflicts, we are genuinely free to make a choice every day. We can choose to obey either the promptings of the flesh or the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The two are in direct opposition to each other. See *Galatians 5:16*

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Walking By The Spirit

Is Not:

* Just a good feeling

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* A licence to do whatever we want *Galatians 5:16*

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* Legalism (slavishly obeying a set of rules) *2 Corinthians 3:6, Galatians 5:18*

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Is:

* True freedom *2 Corinthians 3:17*

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* Being led *John 10:27*

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* Walking at God's pace in the right direction *Matthew 11:28-30*

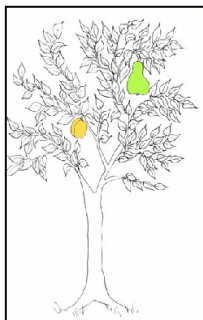
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How Can You Tell If You Are Walking By The Spirit?

The acts of the flesh are obvious:

sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Galatians 5:19-21



The fruit of the Spirit is:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

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In The Coming Week

Every day specifically commit yourself to walk by the Spirit and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you.

Big Question (to consider before the next session)

Read *Romans 6:1-7*. "died to sin" and "no longer be slaves to sin". Have you ever experienced being caught in a pattern of behaviour that you knew was wrong but from which you seemed unable to escape? Or have you found yourself apparently unable to do something good that you knew was right?