



## Summer of Lies – How Lies are Told to Us Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves

- LIE#1:** God uses shame to correct me and change me.  
**LIE#2:** God is not concerned with my everyday life, only the things I do for Him.  
**LIE#3:** Women are not Created to be Leaders  
**LIE#4:** You MUST be Married to Please God  
**LIE#5:** All I Need is God, Who Needs Friends.  
**LIE#6:** God Doesn't Speak to People Today. It was just for Biblical Times.  
**LIE#7:** A Man is the Priest of His Home and a Covering for His Family. All a Woman needs to do is be Submissive.  
**LIE#8:** God is angry.  
**LIE#9:** I Have to Earn God's Love  
**LIE#10:** God Hates Divorced People  
**LIE#11:** God Doesn't Care What I Do With My Money  
**LIE#12;** If God is all powerful, why do bad things happen?  
**LIEW#13:** I Need Jesus. But...  
**LIEW#14:** How Lies are Told to Us: LIED to by: The Devil  
**It is our perception of love that causes us to disbelieve God's love for us...**  
 The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands.—**Martin Luther**

8/24<sup>th</sup>  
 Week #16 Summer of Lies Series: How Lies are Told to Us  
**LIED to by: The WORLD**  
 Join the Wednesday Night Crew along with Pastor Orleen, Pastor Robin and Michelle Ingram in the auditorium at 6:30PM to face this lie and find His truth.

## Week #15: How Lies are Told to Us LIED to by: Ourselves

**SL#2**

### **1 John 2:21**

*I have not written to you because you do not know the truth,  
 but because you know it,  
 and that no lie is of the truth.*

**SL#3**

**ASK:** How does one lie to themselves?

- Stay off the scale?
- Never listen to feedback? Critiques?
- Never disagree with anyone?
- **Not Know Scripture**

What title/name would we give to the process of lying to ourself?

**SL#4** self-de-lu-sion

noun: **self-delusion**; plural noun: **self-delusions**

1. the action of deluding oneself; failure to recognize reality.

de-lude

verb: **delude**; 3rd person present: **deludes**; past tense: **deluded**; past participle: **deluded**; gerund or present participle: **deluding**

1. impose a misleading belief upon (someone); deceive; fool.  
 "too many theorists have deluded the public"

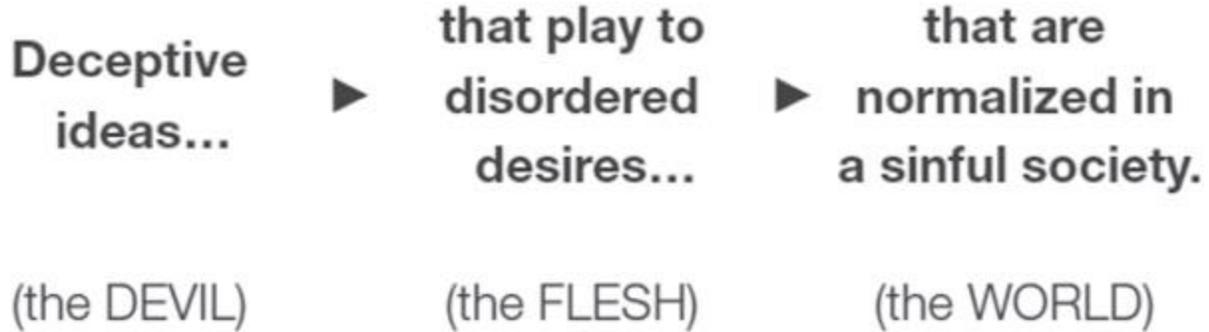
Mislead, deceive, fool, take in, trick, dupe, hoodwink, double cross, gull, beguile, lead on, cheat, defraud, swindle, con, bamboozle, pull a fast one, lead up the garden path, take for a ride



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“Three enemies of the soul: The world. The flesh. The Devil.”  
 (“Live no lies” John Mark Comer. Waterbrook press)

SL#5



1. Our first enemy is the devil - he traffics in deceptive ideas.
2. Our second enemy is our flesh. How hungry it is for elevation and satisfaction. His lies aren't random: they play to some deep fissure in the human heart that is bent in the wrong direction: "Porn is a normal and healthy part of growing up, and sexual exploration is key to living a satisfying, happy life."

SL#6

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5**

*<sup>4</sup>For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup>casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

**Knowledge is not the same thing as intelligence, which is still not the same thing as wisdom.**

SL#6

**2 Timothy 3:7**

*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the **truth**.*

**REVIEW:**

**Template of Temptation:**

SL#7

**Genesis 3:1-7**

*Now the serpent was more **cunning** than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.* Angel of light **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**

**Dons a disguise we find acceptable.**

*And he said to the woman,*

Why was the enemy in the garden to begin with?

Adam was sitting right next to her, why not address him?

Why didn't Adam state Eve was not there at the time this rule/directive was made?

*“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”*

Questioning our **knowledge** of God. Goal = Confusion, Distortion.

(Biblical knowledge, Prayer, Holy Spirit's help is a must.)



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<sup>2</sup> *And the woman said to the serpent,*  
Take that captive...HAVE NO RELATIONSHIP WITH EVIL

*“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;  
<sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,  
God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”*

<sup>4</sup> *Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.*  
**Casting doubt** on: The intent of the LORD. Our **relationship** with the LORD. On our **knowledge** of the LORD.  
Questioning God’s motives.

<sup>5</sup> *For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

Wisdom – When does the pursuit of wisdom become a lie?  
When the enemy **cast doubt** on: The intent of the LORD. On our relationship with the LORD.  
On our knowledge of the LORD. God’s Character. (He wouldn’t do that to you!?!?)  
**All to RECONSTRUCT God’s directives.**

<sup>6</sup> *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

The role of desire in temptation. It is not just visually appealing.  
Besides the 5 senses...Ego was involved.  
Appealing to our human needs and desires and adulation.  
**Senses:** Sight. Smell. Sound. Taste. Touch.

<sup>7</sup> *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

Consequence: Their relationship with the LORD has now been forever changed.  
Jesus = bought that innocence back.

**John 10:10**

*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

**1 Peter 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> *Be sober (self controlled), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

**Luke 22:31**

*And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.*



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Tried same method w/Jesus: (see Matt. 4, Mark 1, and Luke 4).  
Temptation of Christ

SL#8

**Matthew 4**

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.*

<sup>3</sup> *Now when the tempter came to Him, he said,*

*“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”*

- IF = Questioning His authority
- **Physical needs – God’s provision**

<sup>4</sup> *But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”*

<sup>5</sup> *Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him,*

*“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.*

- IF = Questioning His authority
- **God’s protection**

*For it is written:*

*‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’*

*and,*

*‘In their hands they shall bear you up,*

*Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”*

- Adds Scripture to his evil argument. Deception, angel of light.

<sup>7</sup> *Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ”*

<sup>8</sup> *Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”*

- No IF!
- **Human glory – Self aggrandizement**

<sup>10</sup> *Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”*

<sup>11</sup> *Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.*



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SL#9

**Responses of the Flesh:**

{Role of Desire in sin}

Elevate, promote, advance...

**Two dimensins of “flesh”**

**Elevation = Self Aggrandizement**

Involves our ego/mind

**Compromise = Self Gratification**

Ethics, what we know is right and wrong. Things that lead to  
 i.e. Addiction, Control,

Why do I do the things...involve our bodies/thoughts?

**A. Self Aggrandizement (elevation of self)**

**The Galatian agitators lobby for circumcision because they “want to make a good showing in the flesh” (Gal 6:12–13)** and to avoid persecution by boasting in the flesh of the Galatian converts. Perhaps Paul even coined his distinctive use of the term *flesh* in the midst of his controversy with the Galatians, for they identified “perfection” with circumcision *in the flesh* (Gal 3:3), and the good showing in the flesh is circumcision. Paul may have picked up on this usage to contrast circumcision “in the flesh” with life in the Spirit. LOOK WHAT I HAVE DONE, WHAT I HAVE FOLLOWED, WHAT I BEAR FOR CHRIST...LOOK AT MY OBEDIENCE.

SL#10

**Galatians 6:11-15**

*<sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! <sup>12</sup> As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. <sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*

SL#11

**What does that look like today?**

**Colossians 2:20-23**

*<sup>20</sup> Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— <sup>21</sup> “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” <sup>22</sup> which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup> **These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.***

**What are some examples of this?**

Appearance of wisdom....

- It appeases the world around us as they require it for acceptance.
- Serves as uniting purpose for the world.
- Looks holy, sacrificial.

**LIE: Animals are “human”.**



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SL#12

1Jn 2:16

*For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.*

**B. Self Gratification – Compromise to desire**

**Romans 7:1-25**

<sup>7</sup> What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."<sup>8</sup> But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. <sup>9</sup> I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. <sup>10</sup> And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. <sup>12</sup> Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

**Law Cannot Save from Sin**

<sup>13</sup> Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. <sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. <sup>16</sup> If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup> But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> 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.

SL#13. CEB

Romans 7:7-

<sup>7</sup> So what are we going to say? That the Law is sin? Absolutely not! But I wouldn't have known sin except through the Law. I wouldn't have known the desire for what others have if the Law had not said, Don't desire to take what others have. <sup>8</sup> But sin seized the opportunity and used this commandment to produce all kinds of desires in me. Sin is dead without the Law. <sup>9</sup> I used to be alive without the Law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, <sup>10</sup> and I died. So the commandment that was intended to give life brought death. <sup>11</sup> Sin seized the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and killed me. <sup>12</sup> So the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

**Living under the Law**

SL#14

<sup>13</sup> So did something good bring death to me? Absolutely not! But sin caused my death through something good so that sin would be exposed as sin. That way sin would become even more thoroughly sinful through the commandment. <sup>14</sup> **We know that the Law is spiritual, but I'm made of flesh and blood, and I'm sold as a slave to sin.**

<sup>15</sup> I don't know what I'm doing, because I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do the thing that I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I'm doing the thing that I don't want to do, I'm agreeing that the Law is right. <sup>17</sup> But now I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it's sin that lives in me. <sup>18</sup> I know that good doesn't live in me—that is, in my body. The desire to do good is inside of me, but I can't do it. <sup>19</sup> I don't do the good that I want to do, but I do the evil that I don't want to do. <sup>20</sup> But if I do the very thing that I don't want to do, then I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it is sin that lives in me that is doing it.



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**SL#15**

<sup>21</sup> So I find that, as a rule, when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> I gladly agree with the Law on the inside,<sup>23</sup> but I see a different law at work in my body. It wages a war against the law of my mind and takes me prisoner with the law of sin that is in my body. <sup>24</sup> I'm a miserable human being. Who will deliver me from this dead corpse? <sup>25</sup> Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I'm a slave to God's Law in my mind, but I'm a slave to sin's law in my body.

**Romans 6:1-23**

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be <sup>[a]</sup>done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup> For he who has died has been <sup>[b]</sup>freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> Likewise you also, <sup>[c]</sup>reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup> And do not present your members as <sup>[d]</sup>instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

**From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God**

*<sup>15</sup> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were <sup>[e]</sup>delivered. <sup>18</sup> And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness <sup>[f]</sup>for holiness.*

*<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit <sup>[g]</sup>to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the <sup>[h]</sup>gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**SL#16**

**CEB**

**Our new life in Christ**

**6** So what are we going to say? Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply? <sup>2</sup> Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. **That way we wouldn't be slaves to sin anymore, <sup>7</sup> because a person who has died has been freed from sin's power.** <sup>8</sup> But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him.



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**SL#17**

<sup>9</sup> We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him. <sup>10</sup> He died to sin once and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. <sup>11</sup> **In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.**

<sup>12</sup> So then, don't let sin rule your body, so that you do what it wants. <sup>13</sup> Don't offer parts of your body to sin, to be used as weapons to do wrong. Instead, present yourselves to God as people who have been brought back to life from the dead, and offer all the parts of your body to God to be used as weapons to do right. <sup>14</sup> Sin will have no power over you, because you aren't under Law but under grace.

**Freedom from sin**

**SL#18**

<sup>15</sup> So what? Should we sin because we aren't under Law but under grace? Absolutely not! <sup>16</sup> **Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, that you are slaves of the one whom you obey?** That's true whether you serve as slaves of sin, which leads to death, or as slaves of the kind of obedience that leads to righteousness. <sup>17</sup> But thank God that although you used to be slaves of sin, you gave wholehearted obedience to the teaching that was handed down to you, which provides a pattern. <sup>18</sup> Now that you have been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> (I'm speaking with ordinary metaphors because of your limitations.) Once, you offered the parts of your body to be used as slaves to impurity and to lawless behavior that leads to still more lawless behavior. Now, you should present the parts of your body as slaves to righteousness, which makes your lives holy. <sup>20</sup> When you were slaves of sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup> What consequences did you get from doing things that you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and become slaves to God, you have the consequence of a holy life, and the outcome is eternal life. <sup>23</sup> The wages that sin pays are death, but God's gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**SL#19**

**Evagrius Ponticus 4<sup>th</sup> Century**

Evagrius generated the most sophisticated demonology in all of ancient Christianity.

And the most surprising feature of Evagrius's paradigm is his claim that the fight against demonic temptation is a fight against what he called *logismoi* {pronounced, lo-gee-smee}

—a Greek word that can be translated as “thoughts,” “thought patterns,” your “internal narratives,” or “internal belief structures.”

They are the **content of our thought lives** and the mental markers by which we navigate life.

For Evagrius, these logismoi weren't *just* thoughts; they were thoughts with a malignant will behind them, a dark, animating force of evil.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Comer, J. M. (2021). [Live no lies: recognize and resist the three enemies that sabotage your peace](#). Form.



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- When is the last time I can spot a lie the enemy has slathered over me?
- What are my “flags” that tell me I know this is a lie? (it’s gotta go well beyond feeling)
- Am I stuck in a self-defeating cycle?
- Am I playing tug-of-war with worldly desire?
- Is my mind just tired?
- Is overwhelmed a normal state of being for me?
- How comfortable am I within the structures of this world’s attitude, point of view, mindset?

The biggest lie we can swallow is that there is no demonic entity that is at war with humanity. {The exploitation and torture of children. Even the animal population does not torture nor exploit their young.}

Evagrius: His handbook had five hundred entries; yours can have five.

- Turn Your Back to Them \* “This is a lie!”
- When the lies come, don’t open a dialogue with them.
- Just “change the channel” to truth. **Resist by redirection.**
- Evagrius and the ancients called this *antirrhexis*, or “countertalking.”

Comer, J. M. (2021). [Live no lies: recognize and resist the three enemies that sabotage your peace](#). Form.

**Prayer Works:** (invite Michelle up to direct with me)

- Obsessive Thought
- Toxic Sensations
- Overwhelming Feelings: Overwhelming Emotion(s)

**SL#20**

**What’s the reoccurring thought, feeling, and/or sensation?**

*That this mouse will harm me.*

**What’s the lie beneath the thought, feeling, and/or sensation that reveals your attachment/connection with it?**

*I AM NOT SAFE. That the mouse is more crafty and more dangerous than a human.*

**What’s the truth?**

**Isaiah 49:15-16a**

*“Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
 And not have compassion on the son of her womb?  
 Surely they may forget,  
 Yet I will not forget you.  
<sup>16</sup> See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;*

**What’s the reoccurring thought, feeling, and/or sensation?**

**What’s the lie beneath the thought, feeling, and/or sensation that reveals your attachment?**

**What’s the truth?**



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**SL#21**

**Proverbs 16:6** In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the Lord *one* departs from evil.

**John 16:13** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

**John 17:17** Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

**1 John 2:21** I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

**1 John 3:18** My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

**1 John 4:6** We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**1 John 5:6** And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

**SL#22**

**John 8:32**

*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

And you shall know the TRUTH  
 And HE shall make you free.

Lied to by the Devil:

**I. LIE (Deceptive Idea) : Man’s Wisdom Knows No Boundaries**

- A. Tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-9 Genesis 1:28; Genesis 9:1**
- B. Titanic** – They do not need life boats for all on board as this ship will never sink.

**TRUTH:** “Man Cannot Acclaim the Authority of God.”

**C. Bolstering the Lie: The Worship of Intelligentsia**

Process: SHIFT the influence of belief in Christ.

~~SHIFT: Identify the Catalysts. Gather the Leaders. Declare a Decision. Engage a Group. Implement.~~

- #1. MOVE them from the majority to the minority.**
- #2. SHIFT their place in culture from a place of honor to a place of shame.**
- #3. LABEL them to promote widespread tolerance to a rising hostility.**

**LIE:** We are smarter than our ancestors.

- **Chronological snobbery**

**LIE:** There is no moral truth. Only Relativism (what works for you)

With all our education, advancements in science, worldwide community, exploding technology...why can't we make headway in fixing society's problems?

**II. Living Lie Ready**

**Closing:**

- **Flynn Effect – “now we know better”**

James Flynn, a psychologist from New Zealand’s University of Otago, asserted that IQ tests have been on the rise in Western industrialized countries since the 1950s by a growth curve of about three points per decade. **His original thesis: we’re smarter than our grandparents.**

- b. **but knowledge is not the same thing as intelligence, which is still not the same thing as wisdom.**

**2 Timothy 3:7**

*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

[Is Jesus smarter than Stephen Hawking? Jeff Bezos? XXX?]



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**NOTES:**

**OF THE FLESH**

*John 1:13* who were born, not of blood, nor of the will *of the flesh*, nor of the will of man, but of God

***John 3:6* That which is born *of the flesh* is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit**

***Rom 8:5* For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things *of the flesh*, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit**

*Rom 9:8* That is, those who are the children *of the flesh*, these are not the children of God

*1Cor 5:5* deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction *of the flesh*, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (boundaries?)

*2Cor 7:1* Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness *of the flesh* and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God

***Gal 5:16* Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust *of the flesh***

*Gal 5:19* Now the works *of the flesh* are evident, which are

*Gal 6:8* For he who sows to his flesh will *of the flesh* reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life

***Eph 2:3* among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires *of the flesh* and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others**

*Col 2:11* In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins *of the flesh*, by the circumcision of Christ

***Col 2:23* These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence *of the flesh***

*Heb 9:13* For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying *of the flesh*

*1Pet 3:21* There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth *of the flesh*, but the answer of a good conscience toward God

*2Pet 2:18* For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts *of the flesh*, through licentiousness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error



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**1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.<sup>2</sup>**

**FLESH**—the physical bodies of humans or animals. When God removed a rib from Adam with which he created Eve, he closed up the place with flesh (Gen. 2:21). The apostle Paul spoke of the flesh of men, beasts, fish, and birds (1 Cor. 15:39).

The imagery of flesh expresses several different ideas in the Bible. Besides the physical body, the word also refers to “the flesh” as the fallen nature of man, representing lusts and desires (Eph. 2:3). The flesh is contrary to the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). Galatians 5:19-23 contrasts works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. Hope for “all flesh” is given in Christ (Isa. 40:5), as the Savior came “in the flesh” (1 John 4:2). He alone has become our salvation, since by the works of the law “no flesh shall be justified” (Gal. 2:16), but in Him “the flesh” may now be filled with God’s grace, goodness, and glory (Rom. 8:1-11) and God’s will for true humanity can be realized (Gal. 5:19-25; Rom. 6:5-14).

**FLESH.** (Job 19:26) *basar* (bah-sar); *Strong’s* #1320: Flesh, body, human being. *Kol basar*, “all flesh,” means all humanity together. *Basar* refers to the human body, and in some instances, to the bodies of animals as well. Occasionally, *basar* means “meat,” that is, the cooked or uncooked pieces of animal flesh, as in Numbers 11:33. The first occurrence of *basar* is in Genesis 2:21, where God closed up the sleeping man’s “flesh” after extracting one rib. The simplest meaning is “the visible part of man or animal,” that is, the skin, muscle, flesh, and so on.

**Also (Matt. 26:41) *sarx* (sarks); *Strong’s* #4561:** In its literal sense, *sarx* refers to the substance of the body, whether of animals or persons (1 Cor. 15:39; 2 Cor. 12:7). In its idiomatic use, the word indicates the human race or personhood (Matt. 24:22; 1 Pet. 1:24). In an ethical and spiritual sense, *sarx* is the lower nature of a person, the seat and vehicle of sinful desires (Rom. 7:25; 8:4-9; Gal. 5:16-17).<sup>3</sup>

## The Flesh

*Designating human beings.* One of the fundamental terms used by Paul to describe the condition of unbelievers is *flesh* (*sarx*). In keeping with his treatment of most terms, Paul does not use the word *flesh* with only one definition. Sometimes *flesh* is simply a designation for human beings. “No flesh” will be vindicated by works of law before God (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16), nor should any “flesh”—human beings—boast before God (1 Cor 1:29). When Paul received his revelation of Christ on the way to Damascus, he did not consult with “flesh and blood” (Gal 1:16). On the other hand, the spiritual forces with which believers struggle are not “flesh and blood” (Eph 6:12).

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Nelson Publishers. (2000). [\*Find it Fast in the Bible\*](#) (pp. 514–515). T. Nelson Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). [\*Hayford’s Bible handbook\*](#). Thomas Nelson Publishers.



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*Designating the physical body.* The term *flesh* also refers to the physical body or substance with which a person or thing is composed. One of the more interesting passages in this regard is 1 Corinthians 15:39, where human beings, beasts, birds and fish are all said to have a different kind of flesh. The substance with which they are composed varies so that they have distinct physical characteristics.

When Paul refers to “the life I live in the flesh” (Gal 2:20), the prepositional phrase *in the flesh* should not be equated with *in the flesh* in Romans 7:5, where the context clearly indicates a reference to the unregenerate state. In Galatians 2:20 Paul merely speaks of his life in the body, a life that he lives by faith. Similarly, Paul’s “walking in the flesh” in 2 Corinthians 10:3 does not mean that he lives according to this present evil age, for Paul is careful to say that he does not fight “according to the flesh” (2 Cor 10:3). In this context, *walking in the flesh* designates life in the body. Similarly, in Philippians 1:22, 24 living and remaining “in the flesh” refer to life in the physical body. Paul completes Christ’s afflictions in his “flesh” (Col 1:24), which clearly means that Paul experiences these afflictions in his body. The Colossians have not seen Paul’s face “in the flesh” (Col 2:1), and he rejoices over their progress in the faith even though he is absent “in the flesh” (Col 2:5). In other words, he is not present bodily. Sexual union means that the couple becomes “one flesh” (1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31), which at the least signifies the physical union between a man and a woman. The life of Jesus is displayed through the suffering of Paul’s “mortal flesh” (2 Cor 4:11). Similarly, when he says that “our flesh had no rest” (2 Cor 7:5), he probably means that he was physically exhausted. It is likely that the “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7) was some kind of physical affliction, for this seems to be the most reasonable way to understand the addition of the words *in the flesh*. Similarly, Paul’s “weakness” and “testing” in the flesh were probably some physical ailment (Gal 4:13–14). Jesus’ physicality is also emphasized. He was descended from David “according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3). Believers were reconciled “in the body of his flesh” (Col 1:22; cf. Eph 2:16). He “was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16).

*Focus on physical descent and relationships.* Closely related to the previous category are those passages that focus on physical descent, kinship or earthly relationships. For example, we have already noted that Christ was descended from David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3), and Romans 9:5 indicates that the Christ is descended from the fathers—the Jewish patriarchs—according to the flesh. A similar usage is found where Abraham is designated “as our forefather according to the flesh” (Rom 4:1). Paul refers to his fellow Jews as his kinsmen in the flesh (Rom 9:3) and hopes to save some of his “flesh” (Rom 11:14), his fellow Israelites. One’s mere physical descent from Abraham does not constitute one’s salvation, and thus Paul argues that “the children of the flesh” (Rom 9:8) are not necessarily the children of God. Perhaps 1 Corinthians 10:18 also suggests the inadequacy of physical ancestry in referring to “Israel according to the flesh.” In Ephesians 2:11 Paul says the Gentiles “in the flesh” were outside the circle of salvation until the coming of Christ. *Flesh* also refers to earthly relationships. Slaves are to obey their masters “according to the flesh” (Eph 6:5; Col 3:22), and Philemon is to receive Onesimus as a brother “both in the flesh and in the Lord” (Philem 16).

*Weakness and the flesh.* In the examples catalogued above, the term *flesh* does not denote evil, and yet the notion of weakness is almost invariably present. Because believers are in Adam and have sinned in him (see below), their bodies are destined to die. The bodily flesh of this age is subject to weakness and death. This explains why Paul says that “flesh and blood will not inherit



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the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50), for the corruptible earthly body cannot enter the future kingdom. We have seen a number of texts that link the flesh with suffering, and such suffering, of course, is only possible during this present evil age. Though Jesus’ lineage from David according to the flesh does not suggest in the least that he is sinful (Rom 1:3), the idea of weakness is certainly present, for his physical descent from David is contrasted with his being appointed Son of God with power at the resurrection (Rom 1:4). Jesus did not enter into the world with flesh that was impervious to suffering, but he suffered “in the body of his flesh through death” to reconcile sinners to God (Col 1:22). God “sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” to remove the condemnation that was imposed because of sin (Rom 8:3). The phrase *likeness of sinful flesh* (*homoiomati sarkos hamartias*) indicates that Jesus participated in the sin of this age by taking on himself bodily flesh that was weak and subject to death. The word *likeness*, however, guards against the notion that Jesus himself was a sinner. He willingly endured the weakness and sin of the present evil age without being stained with sin himself. The limitations of the flesh are also communicated when Paul explains that he uses a particular illustration “because of the weakness of your flesh” (Rom 6:19).

***The flesh and the present evil age.* Paul’s distinctive use of the term *flesh* is the subject of much controversy. On first glance the correlation of *flesh* with evil and sin suggests the body-mind dualism characteristic of Greek thought. On this construction the flesh is evil because it is *physical*. Some scholars in the history of interpretation have drawn this conclusion about Paul’s use of the term. The error of this view becomes apparent when we realize that Paul believed in a future physical resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15). A Hebrew who envisions future existence with a resurrected body does not equate the physical with evil. It is also clear that the “sins of the flesh” are not restricted to physical sins in Paul. “The works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19–21) include sins like idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfish-ambition, dissension, factions and envy. It is scarcely plausible to say, for instance, that envy has a physical source. Romans 13:13–14 leads to the same conclusion, for sins that are identified with the flesh are not only drunkenness and sexual sin but also strife and jealousy. Similarly, in Romans 7:7–25—where the power of the flesh is featured—the sin that is given prominence is not sexual sin (such as adultery) but coveting. The prohibition against coveting in Romans 7 is generalized to include coveting in all its manifestations. In several texts the negative impact of the flesh focuses especially on pride (2 Cor 11:18; Gal 6:12–13; Phil 3:3–4). The notion that the flesh designates only the physical dimension of human beings, given the evidence adduced here, can be safely set aside.**

Others focus on the ontological dimensions of the “flesh.” Such a perspective is reflected in the NIV translation that renders *flesh* as “sinful nature.” Such a rendering is unfortunate since it introduces ontological language precipitously into the Pauline materials and compels readers to understand the flesh solely in ontological categories. **A more satisfying approach understands flesh in redemptive-historical categories.** Paul’s disjunction between the first and second Adam (see below) reflects his view of salvation history. The present evil age was introduced into the world via the sin of Adam, while the coming age has been inaugurated but not consummated through the death and resurrection of the second Adam—Jesus Christ. Thus, the age to come overlaps with the present evil age. **The “flesh” designates human beings who are under the dominion of the evil era. In Romans 7:5 Paul says, “when we were in the flesh,” referring to the pre-Christian experience of his readers. Being “in the flesh” involves the inability to keep the**



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law so that death is the inevitable result. On the other hand, those who have the Spirit are freed from the power of sin and the law so that they can please God (Rom 7:6). The redemptive-historical dimension is supported by the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit because the Spirit is a gift of the coming age (Is 44:3; Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27; Joel 2:28).

The dichotomy between the flesh and Spirit receives sustained attention in Romans 8:5–13. An emphatic contrast exists between those who think according to the flesh and those who think according to the Spirit. The mindset of the flesh leads to death; the mindset of the Spirit results in life and peace. The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God and does not and cannot keep his law. Indeed, believers are not “in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom 8:9). Paul does not define believers as being “in the flesh” or as having a “sinful nature.” Those who are in the flesh are unbelievers, but believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and live in the age to come. They have been freed from the tyranny of the flesh by the death of Christ (Col 2:11), whereas unbelievers are subjugated to the flesh (Rom 7:18, 25). Those who indulge the desires of the flesh are unbelievers (Eph 2:3). The opposition between the flesh and Spirit is pronounced in Galatians as well (Gal 5:13–24; 6:8). The polarization again is best accounted for in salvation-historical categories. Those who have the Spirit are freed from the dominion of the former eon and now live in the new age that has begun with the death and resurrection of Jesus. They have definitively “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24).

The “wise according to the flesh” (1 Cor 1:26) will be rejected at the judgment because their wisdom is of this world (1 Cor 1:20; 3:18–20) and in accordance with “the rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:6, 8). The redemptive-historical backdrop for the term *flesh* emerges clearly here: “debater of *this age*” (1 Cor 1:20), “the wisdom of *the world*” (1 Cor 1:20), “wisdom not of *this age*” (1 Cor 2:6), “rulers of *this age* who are coming to an end” (1 Cor 2:6), “rulers of *this age*” (1 Cor 2:8), “if anyone thinks to be wise *in this age*” (1 Cor 3:18), “the wisdom of *this world*” (1 Cor 3:19). Paul is worried about the Corinthians precisely because they are beginning to view the world in terms acceptable to unbelievers. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul refuses to estimate anyone “according to the flesh,” even, or perhaps especially, the Christ. The reason for this is that the “new creation” has dawned, so that the old things have passed and new things have arrived (2 Cor 5:17). Those who estimate Christ according to the flesh are submerged in the old era, despite the inception of the new one. The many who “boast according to the flesh” (2 Cor 11:18) are sham Christians, claiming to be apostles and ministers of Christ when actually they are servants of Satan (2 Cor 11:13–15). By warring according to the flesh (2 Cor 10:3), unlike Paul, they show their true identity. Thus, Paul emphatically repudiates the notion that he makes promises “according to the flesh” (2 Cor 1:17), for such an approach would compromise the faithfulness of the gospel and the reliability of God’s promises (2 Cor 1:18–20).

Paul’s stance in Galatians and Philippians is similar to his response to opponents in 2 Corinthians. **The Galatian agitators lobby for circumcision because they “want to make a good showing in the flesh” (Gal 6:12–13)** and to avoid persecution by boasting in the flesh of the Galatian converts. Perhaps Paul even coined his distinctive use of the term *flesh* in the midst of his controversy with the Galatians, for they identified “perfection” with circumcision *in the flesh* (Gal 3:3), and the good showing in the flesh is circumcision. Paul may have picked up on this usage to contrast circumcision “in the flesh” with life in the Spirit. The Philippian opponents were probably Judaizers—like the adversaries in Galatia. The “dogs” insist on circumcision, which to



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Paul is nothing less than “mutilation” (Phil 3:2). They do so in order to boast in the flesh (Phil 3:3–4). In both Galatians and Philippians, Paul sees only eschatological destruction awaiting those who promulgate or receive such teaching (Gal 5:2–6; Phil 3:17–21). Those who follow the dictates of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21). The false teachers in Colossae were probably of a different stripe, but Paul’s conception of the flesh is the same. Those who are dead in trespasses are “in the uncircumcision of the flesh” (Col 2:13), which is a metaphorical way of saying that they are unregenerate. Nor does Paul estimate the philosophy being advocated (Col 2:8) as having any value. It is in accord with human traditions (Col 2:8). Those who champion it are “puffed up by the mind of the flesh” (Col 2:18), and their ascetic regimen has no value in restraining the indulgence of the flesh (Col 2:23).

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God, honor him or keep his commands, for those who have not been inducted into the age to come will invariably resist God. Readers of Paul will inevitably think of the many texts where believers are called on to resist the flesh, texts that we will explore in more detail in due course (e.g., Rom 8:4, 12–13; 13:14; 2 Cor 10:2–4; Gal 3:3; 5:13, 16–17, 19; 6:8). What must be said here is that the threat of the flesh to believers indicates that the age to come has not been *consummated*. The overlap of the ages explains how believers can be in the Spirit and yet must struggle against the flesh. It is crucial also to see that anyone who lets the flesh have dominion will not receive eternal life (Rom 8:13; Gal 6:8). Paul does not think anyone will enter into the kingdom of God if the flesh rules in his or her life (Gal 5:19–21). The redemptive-historical contrast between the flesh and the Spirit, therefore, is ultimately absolute. Believers struggle against the flesh only because they have not yet obtained the fullness of redemption (Rom 8:10–11, 23). Submitting to the flesh is to subjugate oneself to the present evil age. That is why Paul is so concerned about the Galatians’ temptation to embrace circumcision (Gal 5:2–4), for they somehow think that perfection can be accomplished by the flesh even though their life in Christ was initiated by the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

**FLESH** - the physical bodies of humans or animals. When God removed a rib from Adam with which he created Eve, he closed up the place with flesh (Gen. 2:21). The apostle Paul spoke of the flesh of men, beasts, fish, and birds (1 Cor. 15:39).

The imagery of flesh expresses several different ideas in the Bible. Rather than only the “fleshy” parts of the body, the word could also refer to the entire body (Gal. 5:13). From this idea, the concept of a fleshly or human bond between people follows. A man and his wife “shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24), while a man can tell his family that “I am your own flesh and bone” (Judg. 9:2). “Flesh” is even used occasionally to describe all of mankind, and even animals (Gen. 6:3).

Biblical writers thought of the flesh as weak. The Psalmist sang, “In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?” (Ps. 56:4). The weakness of the flesh was blamed for the disciples’ inability to keep watch with Jesus in Gethsemane on the eve of His crucifixion (Mark 14:38).

In an even stronger sense, flesh is the earthly part of a person, representing lusts and desires (Eph. 2:3). The flesh is contrary to the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). Galatians 5:19–23 contrasts works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. The

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<sup>4</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2006). [Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology](#) (pp. 140–146). IVP Academic.



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flesh is not completely condemned, however, for Christ Himself was described as being "in the flesh" (1 John 4:2). Christ alone is our salvation, since by the works of the law "no flesh shall be justified" (Gal. 2:16).<sup>5</sup>

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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*Walking by the Spirit*

*Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh, with the passions and lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk (Gal. 5:16, 24–25)*

“If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us walk.” These words suggest to us very clearly the difference between the sickly and the healthy Christian life. In the former the Christian is content to “live by the Spirit;” he is satisfied with knowing that he has the new life; but he does not walk by the Spirit. The true believer, on the contrary, is not content without having his whole walk and conversation in the power of the Spirit. He walks by the Spirit, and so does not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

**Failure to Walk in the Spirit**

As the Christian strives thus to walk worthy of God and well-pleasing to Him in all things, he is often sorely troubled at the power of sin, and asks what the cause may be that he so often fails in conquering it. The answer to this question he ordinarily finds in his want of faith or faithfulness, in his natural feebleness or the mighty power of Satan.

Alas! if he rests content with this solution. It is well for him if he press on to find the deeper reason why all these things, from which Christ secured deliverance for him, still can overcome. One of the deepest secrets of the Christian life is the knowledge that the one great power that keeps the Spirit of God from ruling, that the last enemy that must yield to Him, is the flesh. He that knows what *the flesh* is, how it works and how it must be dealt with, will be conqueror.

We know how it was on account of their ignorance of this that the Galatians so sadly failed. It was this led them to attempt to perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit (3:3). It was this made them a prey to those who desired “to make a fair show in the flesh” that they might “glory in the flesh” (6:12, 13). They knew not how incorrigibly corrupt the flesh was. They knew not that, as sinful as our nature is when fulfilling its own lusts, as sinful is it when making “a fair show in the flesh;” it apparently yields itself to the service of God, and undertakes to perfect what the Spirit had begun.

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<sup>5</sup> Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. (1995). In [Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary](#). Thomas Nelson, Inc.



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Because they knew not this, they were unable to check the flesh in its passions and lusts; these obtained the victory over them, so that they did what they did not wish. They knew not that, as long as the flesh, self-effort, and self-will had any influence in serving God, it would remain strong to serve sin, and that the only way to render it impotent to do evil was to render it impotent in its attempts to do good.

It is to discover the truth of God concerning the flesh, both in its service of God and of sin, that this epistle was written. Paul wants to teach them how the Spirit, and the Spirit alone, is the power of the Christian life, and how this cannot be except as the flesh, with all that it means, is utterly and entirely set aside. And in answer to the question how this can be, he gives the wonderful answer which is one of the central thoughts of God's revelation. The crucifixion and death of Christ is the revelation not only of an atonement for sin, but of a power which frees from the actual dominion of sin, as it is rooted in the flesh.

When Paul in the midst of his teaching about the walk in the Spirit (16–26) tells us, "They that are Christ's have *crucified* the flesh with its passions and lusts," he tells us what the only way is in which deliverance from the flesh is to be found. To understand this word, "crucified the flesh," and abide it, is the secret of walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Let each one who longs to walk by the Spirit try to enter into its meaning.

### **"The Flesh"**

In Scripture this expression means the whole of our human nature in its present condition under the power of sin. It includes our whole being, spirit, soul, and body. After the fall, God said, "man is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). All his powers, intellect, emotions, will—all are under the power of the flesh. Scripture speaks of the will of the flesh, of the mind of the flesh (fleshly mind), of the passions and lusts of the flesh. It tells us that in our flesh dwelleth no good: the mind of the flesh is at enmity against God.

On this ground it teaches that nothing that is of the flesh, that the fleshly mind or will thinks or does, however fair the show it makes, and however much men may glory in it, can have any value in the sight of God. It warns us that our greatest danger in religion, the cause of our feebleness and failure, is our having confidence in the flesh, its wisdom and its work. It tells us that, to be pleasing to God, this flesh, with its self-will and self-effort, must entirely be dispossessed, to make way for the willing and the working of Another, even the Spirit of God. And that the only way to be made free from the power of the flesh, and have it put out of the way, is to have it crucified and given over to the death.

### **Crucifying the Flesh**

"They that are of Christ Jesus *have crucified* the flesh." Men often speak of crucifying the flesh as a thing that has to be done. Scripture always speaks of it as a thing that has been done, an accomplished fact. "Knowing this, that our old man *was crucified* with Him." "*I have been crucified* with Christ." "They that are of Christ Jesus *have crucified* the flesh." "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world *hath been crucified* unto me, and I unto the world."

What Christ, through the eternal Spirit, did on the cross, He did not as an individual, but in the name of that human nature which, as its Head, He had taken upon Himself. Every one who



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accepts Christ receives Him as the Crucified One, receives not only the merit but the power of His crucifixion, is united and identified with Him, and is called on intelligently and voluntarily to realize and maintain that identification. “They that are of Christ Jesus” have, in virtue of their accepting the crucified Christ as their life, given up their flesh to that cross which is of the very essence of the person and character of Christ as He now lives in heaven; they “have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.”

But what does this mean: “They have *crucified* the flesh”? Some are content with the general truth: the cross takes away the curse which there was on the flesh. Others think of causing the flesh pain and suffering, of the duty of denying and mortifying it. Others, again, of the moral influence the thought of the cross will exercise.

In each of these views there is an element of truth. But if they are to be realized in power, we must go to the root-thought: to crucify the flesh is, to give it over to the curse. The cross and the curse are inseparable (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). To say, “Our old man has been crucified with Him,” “I have been crucified with Christ,” means something very solemn and awful. It means this: I have seen that my old nature, myself, deserves the curse; that there is no way of getting rid of it but by death: I voluntarily give it to the death. I have accepted as my life the Christ who came to give Himself, His flesh, to the cursed death of the cross; who received His new life alone owing to that death and in virtue of it: I give my old man, my flesh, self, with its will and work, as a sinful, accursed thing, to the cross. It is nailed there: in Christ I am dead to it, and free from it. It is not yet dead; but day by day in union with Christ will I keep it there, making dead, as they still seek to rise up, every one of its members and deeds in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Accepting the Power of the Cross

The power of this truth depends upon its being known, accepted, and acted on. If I only know the cross in its substitution, but not, as Paul gloried in it, in its fellowship (Gal. 6:14), I never can experience its power to sanctify. As the blessed truth of its fellowship dawns upon me, I see how by faith I enter into and live in spiritual communion with that Jesus who, as my head and leader, made and proved the cross the only ladder to the Throne. This spiritual union, maintained by faith, becomes a moral one. I have the same mind or disposition that was in Christ Jesus. I regard the flesh as sinful, and only fit for the curse. I accept the cross, with its death to what is flesh, secured to me in Jesus, as the only way to become free from the power of self, and to walk in the new life by the Spirit of Christ.

The way in which this faith in the power of the cross, as at once the revelation and the removal of the curse and the power of the flesh, is very simple, and yet very solemn. I begin to understand that my one danger in living by the Spirit is yielding to the flesh or self in its attempt to serve God. I see that it renders the cross of Christ of none effect (1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 3:3, 5:12, 13; Phil. 3:3, 4; Col. 2:18–23).

I see how all that was of man and nature, of law and human effort, was for ever judged of God on Calvary. There flesh proved that, with all its wisdom and all its religion, it hated and rejected the Son of God. There God proved how the only way to deliver from the flesh was to give it to death as an accursed thing. I begin to understand that the one thing I need is: to look upon the flesh as God does; to accept of the death-warrant the cross brings to everything in me that is of the flesh, to look upon it, and all that comes from it, as an accursed thing.



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As this habit of soul grows on me, I learn to fear nothing so much as myself. I tremble at the thought of allowing the flesh, my natural mind and will, to usurp the place of the Holy Spirit. My whole posture towards Christ is that of lowly fear, in the consciousness of having within me that accursed thing that is ever ready, as an angel of light, to intrude itself in the Holiest of all, and lead me astray to serve God, not in the Spirit of Christ, but in the power that is of nature. It is in such a lowly fear that the believer is taught to believe fully the need, but also the provision, of the Holy Spirit to take entirely the place which the flesh once had, and day by day to glory in the cross, of which he can say, "By it I have been crucified to the world."

We often seek for the cause of failure in the Christian life. We often think that because we are sound on what the Galatians did not understand—justification by faith alone—their danger was not ours. Oh that we knew to what an extent we have allowed the flesh to work in our religion!

Let us pray God for grace to know it as our bitterest enemy, and the enemy of Christ. Free grace does not only mean the pardon of sin; it means the power of the new life through the Holy Spirit. Let us consent to what God says of the flesh, and all that comes of it: that it is sinful, condemned, accursed. Let us fear nothing so much as the secret workings of our flesh. Let us accept the teaching of God's word: "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing;" "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

Let us ask God to show us how entirely the Spirit must possess us, if we are to be pleasing to Him in all things. Let us believe that as we daily glory in the cross, and, in prayer and obedience, yield the flesh to the death on the cross, Christ will accept our surrender, and will, by His divine power, maintain mightily in us the life of the Spirit. And we shall learn not only to live by the Spirit, but, as those who are made free from the power of the flesh, by its crucifixion, maintained by faith, in very deed to walk by the Spirit.

**A Prayer to Walk by the Spirit**

Blessed God! I beseech Thee to reveal to me the full meaning of what Thy word has been teaching me, that it is as one who has crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts, that I can walk by the Spirit.

O my Father! teach me to see that all that is of nature and of self is of the flesh; that the flesh has been tested by Thee, and found wanting, worthy of nothing but the curse and death. Teach me that my Lord Jesus led the way, and acknowledged the justice of Thy curse, that I too might be willing and have the power to give it up to the cross as an accursed thing. Oh, give me grace day by day greatly to fear before Thee, lest I allow the flesh to intrude into the work of the Spirit, and to grieve Him. And teach me that the Holy Spirit has indeed been given to be the life of my life, and to fill my whole being with the power of the death and the life of my blessed Lord living in me.

Blessed Lord Jesus! who didst send Thy Holy Spirit, to secure the uninterrupted enjoyment of Thy presence, and Thy saving power within us, I yield myself to be entirely Thine, to live wholly and only under His leading. I do with my whole heart desire to regard the flesh as crucified and accursed. I solemnly consent to live as a crucified one. Saviour! Thou dost accept my surrender; I trust in Thee to keep me this day walking through the Spirit. Amen.



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*The work of the Holy Spirit is also a prominent theme in Murray's 1895 work Humility, the subtitle of which is The Beauty of Holiness.*

*In "Humility: The Glory of the Creature," Murray discusses how it was God's plan from the beginning to allow His creatures to share in His glory by being vessels for His glory. Pride separates us from this dependence on God, but humility restores us to our proper position before God.*

*While it is easy to believe we are humble before God, the true test of our humility is our "Humility in Daily Life." The only humility which we truly possess is the humility we show in our ordinary conduct.*

*"Humility and Exaltation" describes God's command to humble ourselves and His promise to exalt us when we have humbled ourselves. God's dealings with men are always characterized by two steps. The first is a time of preparation, and the second is a time of fulfillment. These correspond to humility and exaltatio<sup>6</sup>*

**Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

—Jesus, in John 8v34, 36

**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.**

—Paul, in Galatians 5v13, 16–17

**Men are qualified for civil liberty, in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.**

—Edmund Burke, in *A Letter from Mr. Burke, to a Member of the National Assembly*

## **The slavery of freedom**

"The heart wants what it wants," so the popular saying goes.

Yet very few of us remember who made it popular.

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<sup>6</sup> *Heritage of great evangelical teaching : featuring the best of Martin Luther, John Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, C.H. Spurgeon and others.* (1997). Thomas Nelson.



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In 1992, the journalist Walter Isaacson was interviewing Woody Allen for *Time* magazine. The subject was Allen's notorious affair with Soon-Yi Previn.

There's debate as to what actually happened, but the basic story goes something like this: All through the 1980s, Allen was in an on-again, off-again relationship with Mia Farrow, an actress and model. Before she and Allen had begun dating, Farrow and her then-husband André Previn had adopted two children from Vietnam and then a seven-year-old girl from South Korea (Soon-Yi); over the next few years, Farrow adopted two more children. Then she and Allen had a son together. They were an eccentric brood, regularly gracing the covers of tabloids around New York and LA.

Years went by, and Farrow and Allen's relationship began to deteriorate. One day she found photos of her daughter, Soon-Yi, in the nude. *On Allen's fireplace mantel.* The truth came out—Allen and Soon-Yi had been sleeping together.

Allen was fifty-six; Soon-Yi was twenty-one.

And to clarify, Allen had been dating her *mom* for years and was her functional stepdad.

This was decades before #metoo. Hollywood was still in its transgressive glory days, reveling in its *carte blanche* cultural permission to overstep nearly any sexual boundary and take the rest of the country along for the ride. Allen went on to date and then marry Soon-Yi.

Isaacson's interview of Allen reads like a case study in postmodern ethics. Isaacson, one of the best interviewers of our day, calmly but persistently probed Allen's heart for some kind of regret, apology, or even moral uncertainty, but Allen simply refused to admit he'd done anything wrong.

At the very end of the interview, Isaacson asked why he did it. Allen paused, then proffered his iconic line, "The heart wants what it wants."

This off-the-cuff saying has entered not only the vernacular but also the belief system of our generation; it's become a kind of self-perpetuating justification for anything from adultery to chocolate cake. A kind of get-out-of-jail-free card for any behavior that falls outside the lines of moral tradition. Yet very few people realize its origin story. Even my most libertine friends would not approve of an affair between a college girl and a man more than twice her age, much less a sexual escapade where a dad becomes a brother-in-law and a sister becomes a stepmom. And yet, that's the story.

As we continue our exploration of the world, the flesh, and the devil, this story is a great illustration of our next topic. What Allen called the heart is closer to what the writers of the New Testament called the flesh.

To begin, have a look at Paul's language to the Ephesians:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed *the ways of this world* and of *the ruler of the kingdom of the air* [another name for the devil], the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, *gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.*



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Notice Paul’s trifecta of enemies:

The world: “You followed the ways of this world.”

The flesh: “Gratifying the cravings of our flesh.”

The devil: “The ruler [*archōn*] of the kingdom of the air.”

This is where early apprentices of Jesus picked up the framework of the three enemies of the soul. Ancient as they were, the first Christians were wide awake—much more so than many of us are today—to the fact that our fight “is not against flesh and blood,” as Paul wrote a few chapters later. It’s not against Russia or ISIS or the Chinese digital kleptocracy, much less Republicans or Democrats; it’s against a far more insidious axis of evil.

We spent part 1 thinking about **our first enemy, the devil, and how he traffics in deceptive ideas**. Next up on the docket is the flesh. Remember, we said the devil’s primary stratagem is deceitful ideas that play to disordered desires. His lies aren’t random: “Elvis is alive and hiding in Mexico.” No, they play to some deep fissure in the human heart that is bent in the wrong direction: “Porn is a normal and healthy part of growing up, and sexual exploration is key to living a satisfying, happy life.”

The word Paul and the writers of the New Testament used for this aspect of our inner being is the *flesh*.

Now, this is strange language to our modern ears. What exactly did they mean by the flesh?

The word Paul used in Greek is σάρξ (sounds like “sarx”). Similar to English, Greek words often have more than one meaning.

Think of the English word *squash*. It can mean a kind of vegetable, great in fall soups and salads; a quirky British game, similar to racquetball but weirder; or, used as a verb, to destroy or demolish, as in “to squash the bug.”

In the same way, the Greek word σάρξ can mean at least three different things in the New Testament.

It can simply mean the body, as in 1 Corinthians 6v16:

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one *flesh*.”

**Here, *flesh* is a synonym to *body*.** We still use the word this way in our expression *flesh and blood*.

And **when it’s used in the plural, it just means humanity**, as in 1 Peter 1v24:

All *people* are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.

The word *people* is actually σάρξ in Greek. Older translations have “All flesh is as grass.”



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So in this sense, your flesh isn't a bad thing at all, much less an enemy; it's just a word for your physicality in all its fleeting mortality and beauty.

In a similar vein, **a second meaning of σάρξ is your ethnicity.** For example, Paul wrote to the Philippians:

It is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the *flesh*.

In context, Paul was writing about how his Jewishness didn't give him a leg up in the kingdom, combating a form of Jewish supremacy in the Philippian church.

So here, your flesh is simply your ethnicity: your racial, cultural, and/or national identity and history—the language you speak, the food you eat, the thousands of little customs that order your life in a particular time and place and distinguish you from other ethnic groups. Again, flesh in this sense isn't a pejorative in the least, though it can easily be contorted into evil by the heart's universal bent toward prejudice. Still, it's not a bad thing in and of itself.

But there's a third and final meaning. What we talk about when we talk about “the world, the *flesh*, and the devil” is not our body or our ethnicity; it's what Paul wrote about in Ephesians 2v3: “Gratifying the cravings of our flesh.” **Here he means the animalistic cravings of our body apart from God.**

In Romans 7v5, he further defined it as our “sinful passions.”

In fact, in the original New International Version translation (1978), scholars consistently translated σάρξ as “sinful nature.” That did not go over well with theologians, so in the 2011 update, it was changed back to the older translation of “flesh.”

To be fair, the biblical linguists and translators were just attempting to communicate this third sense of the Greek word—the sinful appetite in all of us that feels natural to our bodies and yet is wrong. After all, each of us is more than just a body; we are also a soul.

Peter later defined the flesh as “corrupt desire” and tied it to rebellion against authority. He also wrote about the “corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”<sup>9</sup>

The pastor and scholar Eugene Peterson, who translated the Bible into “American,” defined the flesh as “the corruption that sin has introduced into our very appetites and instincts.”

Basically, it's our base, primal, animalistic drives for **selfgratification**, especially pertaining to sensuality (as in sex and food) but also to pleasure in general, as well as our instincts for survival, domination, and the need for control. Desires that are in *all* of us. In spite of the humanistic atmosphere all around us constantly telling us we're good, we all know we have these desires we don't know what to do with. Because they don't match the cultural messaging we hear all the time, we often feel terrified the truth will come out or we feel shame over our inner lives or even a kind of self-hate. But the New Testament is incredibly open about the dark underbelly of the human heart, and we're invited to explore it under the loving gaze of God's compassion.



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Now, to be clear, this language is unique to Paul and early Christian theologians, but the *idea* is not a specifically Christian one at all. It's an ancient and cross-cultural insight into the problem of the human condition.

Five centuries before Paul, the Buddha said, "In days gone by this mind of mine used to stray wherever selfish desire or lust or pleasure would lead it. Today this mind does not stray and is under the harmony of control, even as a wild elephant is controlled by the trainer." He was comparing his mind's attempt to rein in its desires for "lust or pleasure" to the challenge of riding an elephant, a giant beast.

Around the same time, Plato used the word picture of a chariot driver with two horses tied together, each fighting for domination. One horse he called "a lover of honor with modesty and self-control," while the other was "a companion to wild boasts and indecency . . . shaggy around the ears—deaf as a post—and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined." Notice again, the word picture is of a rider trying to rein in an animal that is powerful and barely under control.

Some rabbis taught that each of us has not one but "two souls, waging war one against the other in the person's mind, each one wishing and desiring to rule over him and pervade his mind exclusively." Rabbi Zalman called them our "animal soul" and our "divine soul."

More recently, the transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, during his solitary, soul-searching time at Walden Pond, wrote, "We are conscious of an animal in us. . . . It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled."

The psychologist Jonathan Haidt simply calls this part of our brain our "animal self." Leading brain expert Jeffrey Schwartz calls it our "animal brain."<sup>16</sup>

Today this ancient idea continues to show up in everything from Joe Rogan and Elon Musk joking on a podcast about how humans are "all chimps," and chimps do terrible, nasty things to each other, to Jordan Peterson writing about the mating dynamics of lobsters as a model for human behavior.<sup>18</sup>

My point is, for a very long time, humans of the more self-aware variety—from across ethnic, religious, and generational lines—have been conscious of a hierarchy of desires in our minds and bodies. Not all desires are created equal. Or at least, not all are equally beneficial. Some of our desires are higher or nobler and lead to life and freedom and peace; others are lower or more animalistic and lead to death and slavery and fear.

All healthy, free people self-edit this inner mix of desires. The wise recognize that pleasure is not the same thing as happiness. Pleasure is about dopamine; happiness is about serotonin. Pleasure is about the next hit to feel good in the moment; happiness is about contentment over the long haul, a sense that my life is rich and satisfying as it is. Pleasure is about want; happiness is about freedom from want.

Most ethicists define happiness as a kind of contentment, a soul-level satisfaction where you are grateful for what is rather than grasping for more, which means: happiness comes as the result of *disciplined desire*. In every area of life—from sex to diet to money—happiness, or the good life, is



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what happens *after* you discipline your desires. You have to curb some of your wants and cultivate others.

This is what the New Testament writers were referring to when they wrote about the inner tug-of-war between the spirit and the flesh. They recognized an invisible but real war in the deepest parts of our beings, raging on the battlefield of desire. As Dostoyevsky said in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man.”

But tragically this ancient idea—which is central to the Way of Jesus—has become a bit of a foreign concept, if not a social pariah, in the late modern West.

Let’s do a little history.

The philosopher Charles Taylor, in his seminal work *A Secular Age*, wrote about how the West changed from a culture of “authority” to a culture of “authenticity.” Meaning, we used to live by what *external* authority structures (God, the Bible, tradition, and so on) *told* us to do, but now most Western people live from what their *internal* “authentic self” *wants* to do.

The tipping point was Freud. While I’m no psychologist, most of my psychologist friends tell me that, savant that he was, Freud got pretty much everything wrong, and yet many of his ideas created the cultural air we now breathe.

Prior to Freud, most people in the West (whether they knew it or not) thought about desire through the lens of the fourth-century philosopher Augustine. Saint Augustine was actually a North African. But his ideas, while developed on African soil, gave shape to much of Western civilization for over a millennium.

According to Augustine, the basic problem of the human condition is that of disordered desires, or loves. In his view, human beings were created *in* love and *for* love. So, we’re lovers first and thinkers second. We live primarily from desire, *not our rational minds*.

In the Augustinian view, the problem of the human condition isn’t that we don’t love; it’s that we love either the wrong things or the right things *but in the wrong order*.

For example, it’s not bad to love your job; I hope you do. But if you love your career more than your teenage son, that’s a disordered love and will create major problems for both you and your child.

Another example: It’s not bad to love your child; I do. But if you love your child more than you love God? That’s disordered and will deform how you relate to both.

It’s not even bad to love sex. God himself created us as sexual beings and commanded us to “increase in number.” But when sex becomes a pseudogod that we look to for identity, for belonging in a community, or for life satisfaction, when it becomes a soteriology (a doctrine of salvation) as it is for so many in the West, that’s a disordered love. And it’s not just that it’s wrong in the moral sense; it’s that it can’t possibly satisfy the deeper ache of the soul for love, intimacy, acceptance, and generativity. After all, the body just wants an orgasm, but the soul wants more—communion and contribution.



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So, in the pre-Freud West, human flourishing was about saying yes to the right desires, the higher desires for love, and no to the lower desires, the baser, more appetite kind of desires. And you would navigate your desires by the mental maps that were handed down to you by a trusted but *external* authority source—ideally, Jesus himself, as his teachings come to us through the New Testament—in order to not repeat the mistakes of previous generations and to carry forward those generations’ cumulative wisdom. After all, you’re not the first human to ever live. Why repeat other people’s mistakes?

Freud’s take was radically contrary. For him, our most important desire was our libido, which he defined as our desire not just for sex but for pleasure as a whole. But because libido without restraint would lead to anarchy, our parents and cultural structures forced us to repress our desire, and for Freud—and this is key—*repression of desire is the basis for all neurosis*. Translation: the reason you’re unhappy is because other people are telling you you can’t do stuff.

It doesn’t take a private investigator to work out whose ideas won the fight for the West’s view of reality.

Freud’s ideas show up in the popular slogans and catchphrases of our day:

“The heart wants what it wants.”

“Follow your heart.”

“You do you.”

“Just do it.”

“Speak your truth.”

And of course, “Be true to yourself.”

Anybody remember Shakespeare from tenth grade? “Be true to yourself” is a quote from his play *Hamlet*. The original version was “This above all: to thine own self be true.”

Anybody remember who said that line? If not, don’t feel bad; I had to look it up. It was Polonius, *the fool*. It’s the fool who encourages us to live by the slogan “Be true to yourself,” and yet we mouth his mantra like it’s gospel. We just assume (remember, ideas are assumptions about reality) that the way to a happy, flourishing life is to follow our hearts, which we often misunderstand to be any authentic desire.

In the past, it was the responsibility of all people to restrain the desires of their flesh; today, it’s the right of all people to follow the desires of their authentic selves.

Jonathan Grant, in his excellent book *Divine Sex*, accurately summed up the tectonic shift:

Modern authenticity encourages us to create our own beliefs and morality, the only rule being that they must resonate with who we feel we *really* are. The worst thing we can do is to conform to some moral code that is imposed on us from outside—by society, our parents, the



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church, or whoever else. It is deemed to be self-evident that any such imposition would undermine our unique identity. . . . The authentic self believes that personal meaning must be found within ourselves or must resonate with our one-of-a-kind personality.

Happiness has become about *feeling* good, not *being* good. The good life has become about getting what we want, not becoming the kind of people who want truly good things.

The self—not God or Scripture—is the new locus of authority in Western culture.

The ethicist Robert C. Roberts, an expert on Freud’s influence on the West, had this observation:

We have been led to feel that the self is sacrosanct: just as in an earlier time it was thought never fitting to deny God, so now it seems never right to deny oneself.

But listen to the perspective of the theologian David Wells on what happens when a society is given over to the flesh:

Theology becomes therapy. . . . The biblical interest in righteousness is replaced by a search for happiness, holiness by wholeness, truth by feeling, ethics by feeling good about one’s self. The world shrinks to the range of personal circumstances; the community of faith shrinks to a circle of personal friends. The past recedes. The Church recedes. The world recedes. All that remains is the self.

Self is the new god, the new spiritual authority, the new morality. But this puts a crushing weight on the self—one it was never designed to bear. It must discover itself. Become itself. Stay true to itself. Justify itself. Make itself happy. Perform and defend its fragile identity. As my Peloton instructor would say, “Validate your greatness.” But what about the many days when we’re not all that great? The pressure is exhausting. Cue the stats on burnout, anxiety, and mental health.

In this new religion of the self, what our ancestors called chastity is now called oppression if it’s externally imposed or repression if it’s internally imposed. What they called self-discipline or self-control, we call, honestly, sin. In a worldview where desire is sacrosanct, *the ultimate sin is to not follow your heart*. As another theologian, Cornelius Plantinga, observed, “In such a culture . . . the self exists to be explored, indulged, and expressed but not disciplined or restrained.”

Like all the most powerful ideas in our world, this one is so lethal because it’s assumed to be true. To even question it is a kind of cultural heresy; to raise the same doubt in others is a gross crime.

But the now-ubiquitous mantra of “Be true to yourself” raises a very interesting question:

Which self?

The spiritual director and psychologist David Benner, in his beautiful little book *The Gift of Being Yourself*, observed, “What we call ‘I’ is really a family of many part-selves.” This might sound like psychobabble, but it’s not. He is noting the complexity of desire in each of us. We have all sorts of desires, many of them contradictory. When people tell us to “follow your heart,” which heart do we follow? And what do we do when our hearts are fickle and our desires change by the hour and fluctuate with our moods?



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Let me give you a very mundane, nonemotionally loaded example: the grocery store checkout line. About once a week, I have this experience: I stop by the market to pick up groceries for dinner, and while I'm waiting in line to pay, I face the ultimate case study in what my friend David Bennett called "a war of loves."

To my right is a magazine rack covered with beautiful, thin, and/or muscular celebrities airbrushed to digital perfection.

Harry Styles is the new gold standard. Ryan Gosling is aging nicely. Timothée Chalamet is stealing the hearts of teenagers the world over.

To my left? Another magazine rack, but this one is covered in decadent photos of food. Enchiladas with guac and sour cream. "Top Ten Summer Beers." "Twenty Best New Restaurants in Portland." "Seven-Layer Dream Cake."

And over the top of both magazine racks? A shelf stacked with sugar, chocolate, and what is affectionately known in our home as "cancer gum."

Now, as I stand in line, I feel two deep, primal desires in my soul. On the one hand, I want to look like Ryan Gosling. But on the other, I want to go home and make the vegan cheesecake with graham cracker crust and strawberry whipped cream. Ahem.

Both desires are "authentic" to my "true self." *But they are mutually exclusive.* As a forty-year-old guy with a type B metabolism, I can't have my cake and eat it too, literally.

So, what do I do with this great existential problem? Easy. I grab *GQ* and the chocolate peanut butter cups (they're organic!) and munch on them while reading about Ryan's ab workout routine. I'll start tomorrow. Done.

That's a humorous experience from many of our regular lives, but the same is true of much more sensitive, more serious conflicts of desire.

I want to love my children well, be present as a father, and intentionally unfold them into their full potential, but I also want to close the door, watch TV, and let them sort out their own annoying problems.

I want to live deeply grateful and content with what I have, as well as practice radical generosity, but I also want to buy a new jacket I don't need and upgrade my perfectly good car.

I want to get up early and soak my mind and heart in Scripture and prayer, but I also want to stay up late watching *Long Way Up*.

We could go on for pages of this because it's the nature of the human experience. But what's easy to miss in the modern view of things is that our strongest desires are not actually our deepest desires.

Let me say that again: *our strongest desires are not actually our deepest desires.*



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What I mean by that is, in the moment of temptation, the raging fire of desire that is your flesh—the desire to make a condescending comment about your coworker, buy another pair of shoes you don't need, overeat, overdrink, lust, ignore God, watch Netflix instead of reading your Bible—feels overwhelming and almost irresistible. But those desires are not actually the deepest, truest desires of your heart; they don't come from the bedrock layer in your soul.

Come to quiet before God . . .

Take a few deep breaths . . .

Let the deepest desires of your heart come to the surface of your heart.

What is it you want?

What do you *really* want?

My guess is, if you go deep enough, you ache for God himself. To live in his love. To yield to his gentle peace. To let your body become a place where his will is done “on earth as it is in heaven.” That's a gift of the Spirit in you.

This is why for all the talk about how human beings are animals, how morality is a social construct, and how we need to be true to ourselves, it's still generally agreed upon that to live a good life, you must become a good person. I've never read an obituary that said, “He really got a lot out of his Tinder subscription.” Or “This girl knew how to eat, drink, and be merry.” Much less “This guy's commitment to sneakers was inspiring.”

Of course not. When people die, we honor and celebrate the best parts of their character. Love, sacrifice, loyalty to family and friends, humility, joy, compassion. *All of which required their denial of fleshly desires.* So while our culture celebrates the gospel of self-actualization, the type of self you actualize into is still paramount.

My point is simply this: our deepest desires—usually to become people of goodness and love—are often sabotaged by the stronger surface-level desires of our flesh. This is exacerbated by a culture where the widespread wisdom of the day is to follow our desires, not crucify them. But in reality, “Be true to yourself” is some of the worst advice anybody could ever give you.

Here's why: giving in to the desires of our flesh does not lead us to freedom and life, as many people assume, but instead to slavery and, in the worst-case scenario, addiction, which is a kind of prolonged suicide by pleasure.

To that we now turn.

**“Their passions forge their fetters”**



## Summer of Lies – How Lies are Told to Us Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves

In the days of intercontinental travel by sea, when you first came to America from the East, it was very likely that the first thing you saw was Lady Liberty. There she was, rising 305 feet out of New York Harbor on, tellingly, Liberty Island. An evocative symbol for the land of the free and the home of the brave.

It comes as no surprise that our founders gave us slogans like “Life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness” and “*Liberty* and justice for all” or even Patrick Henry’s rousing line, “Give me *liberty* or give me death!”

Never mind the tragic irony that we’re also the nation that conducted a multicontinental, transcontinental slave trade of over twelve million Africans (around two million of whom died before they even landed on the East Coast). That as we were rebelling against the oppression of England, we were simultaneously developing a form of chattel slavery as barbaric as any the world had ever seen.

Hypocrisy aside, we Americans vaunt freedom as the ultimate good. In a wide-ranging study of our nation, a group of sociologists led by Robert Bellah discovered that for Americans, “freedom was perhaps the most important value.”

And yet something about this freedom seems to have gone awry. Systemic racism is the most evocative example, but there are so many more. Addiction in our nation is widespread, as is compulsive shopping, debt, financial fraud, obesity, alcoholism, and environmental damage. Anything that requires long-term fidelity is currently in decline: marriage, two-parent families, and so on. Add to that nationalistic xenophobia of the far Right and the anarchist impulse of the far Left.

We often scratch our heads at such realities and think, *How could this happen in the land of the free?*

The constitutional law professor Patrick Deneen from Notre Dame, in his book *Why Liberalism Failed* (a conservative book yet recommended by no less than President Obama), made the point that the trouble with freedom didn’t start in the 1960s with Foucault, Woodstock, and the sexual revolution. It started in the 1760s with the Enlightenment, the founding fathers, and the US Constitution, which he called an attempt to make a whole new kind of human based on a new definition of freedom. This new definition of freedom is both crude and common: freedom is the ability to do whatever you want.

Few Americans realize that is not how Jesus, the writers of the Bible, and the great philosophers of history defined freedom.

To show you what I mean, let’s spend some time in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. There are a few go-to passages in the New Testament on the flesh; Galatians chapters 5 and 6 are my favorite. In Paul’s theological framework, we find an alternate but compelling vision of freedom to that of our Western world.

It will take us more than one chapter to work through Paul’s teaching, but let’s start at the top of Galatians 5.



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It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Now, at first glance, this reads like something a modern American would say. “Stay free! Don’t let anybody or anything control you!” But if you keep reading, you quickly realize Paul did not mean what most of us mean by freedom. Verse 13:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh.

Translation: Just because you’re no longer under the Mosaic covenant, don’t abuse your newfound freedom in Jesus; don’t give in to your disordered desires. Instead, give yourself over to the relational constraints of love.

Paul used the word *freedom* here in the standard philosophical sense of self-determination. Philosophers argue that human beings are the only creatures with self-determining freedom. Unlike the animals, we don’t just run off our primal, evolutionary drives for pleasure and survival. We *have* those drives—whether through evolutionary biology, the fall, or some combination of the two—but we also have self-determining freedom, the capacity to override those drives when they are disordered.

Think of an animal. A coyote doesn’t decide to eat a rabbit or not. It doesn’t see a rabbit and pause to consider, *Is this the right choice?* You won’t find a coyote reading a book on veganism by PETA or queuing up a podcast by Michael Pollan on a plant-based diet. Of course not. It operates by a very simple formula: see rabbit; chase rabbit; eat rabbit. It’s just run by instinctual drives for survival. This is why there are no ethics in the animal kingdom; all is amoral, causal, and drive based. It’s why we don’t hold a predator from the local zoo accountable for eating its prey.

But we’re not coyotes. When we arrive at a restaurant, what does the server give us? A menu, not a live, wriggling rabbit that we fall on and consume raw. We read said menu and weigh our options, like cost, fat content, how this meal will make us feel or appear to our date, and so on. We consider the right wine pairing.

We can also decide whether or not to “eat” a fellow human being through gossip, a lie, injustice, or a subtle re-org of our company to inch our way up the corporate ladder.

This is what separates us from the animals—not our opposable thumbs or even our prefrontal cortices but our ability to choose our courses of action. A migratory bird, for example, has an uncanny, innate ability to fly south and hit Mazatlán right on the nose, every single winter. This is a magnificent ability. But it doesn’t have the ability to say, “Ya know, I think I’ll hit up Santa Fe instead this year or maybe pop by San Diego; I hear the art scene is interesting.” Humans, on the other hand, *decide* where to spend their winters, even if, for most of us, it turns out to be wherever our rent checks are due. This is because we have an enormous amount of self-determining freedom.

But—here’s the rub—freedom is very easy to abuse. And when we abuse freedom, we negate love. Notice Paul’s next line:



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Rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Interesting. For Paul, the opposite of “indulge the flesh” was “love your neighbor.” This is a bit weird sounding at first, because in our culture, we often confuse love with lust. Or more broadly, love with desire.

When we say, “I love chocolate cake,” what we mean is, “I want to *eat* it. Indulge in it. Consume it.”

And when we say, “I love my boyfriend or girlfriend,” we often mean the same thing.

I’m not saying that sexual or romantic desire is bad; it’s a beautiful, God-given joy. But love as defined by Jesus, Paul, and the New Testament is a very different phenomenon. The Greek word they used for love wasn’t *eros* (where we get the word *erotic*) but *agape*. Here’s my best shot at a definition of *agape* love:

A compassionate commitment to delight in the soul of another and to *will that person’s good* ahead of your own, no matter the cost to yourself

Love is the desire not to *take* but to *give*. It’s the settled intention of the heart to promote good in the life of another. To see the beauty inherent in another soul and help them come to see it as well.

Notice: if to love is to will the good, this means that to love people you need knowledge of reality—to know what is *really* good for them. Remember that; we’ll come back to it later.

Paul’s point is that our flesh is anti-love. The flesh runs off our animal drives for self-gratification and survival, which, as Dr. Schwartz of UCLA accurately observed, perceive “fellow sentient, suffering beings as nothing but objects of, or obstacles to, your desires.”

My wife, T, uses the adjective *fleshy* in our home. When someone in our family is in a lousy mood, grouchy, and thinking only about their wants and needs, she will say, “(So and so) is being *fleshy*.”

It’s never me, I promise . . .

While Bible translators might not pick this up in their next edition, she’s right on target. When we’re “in the flesh” (fleshy), we’re out of love. That’s because love—as defined above—is hard work and full of pain as well as joy. The flesh is lazy and self-indulgent. It just wants to feel good in the moment.

Augustine called sin “love turned in on itself.” Likely playing with that idea, Martin Luther later called the one who lived for one’s own pleasure and sensual gratification *homo incurvatus in se*, or “man curved in upon himself.”

Now, with that in mind, look at what Paul says next:



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I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that *you are not to do whatever you want*.

Note: “do whatever you want” is exactly what we’re told by our culture.

As the pop icon Billie Eilish said in an interview for *Vogue*: “My thing is that I can do whatever I want. . . . It’s all about what makes you feel good.” She was defending her wearing a revealing corset for the photo shoot—a symbol many feminists associate with misogyny.

But just because something feels good, doesn’t mean it is good. And if there’s anything we should not do, it’s whatever we want. This is as blatant of a demonic idea as they come.

To be fair, those who advocate the “just do what feels good” philosophy regularly clarify “as long as it doesn’t harm anybody.” From international pop stars to our local baristas, many of our secular neighbors are deeply good, noble people who simply want their fellow citizens to be happy. They still recognize the need for law and order. In fact, they often have a higher standard for human rights than we Christians do. I hate to admit that, but it’s true.

The problem with the “as long as it doesn’t harm anybody” rubric is *it requires an agreed-upon definition of harm*. Something that, in the secular, pluralistic world we inhabit, we don’t have. We no longer have a transcendent moral authority such as God or the Bible to appeal to. We don’t even have the Enlightenment idea of the laws of nature anymore. All we have is the self and the state. The problem is, all sorts of things are legal that do not lead to human flourishing.

This debate over harm is really a debate over ethics. To define an act as “love” or “hate” requires an agreed-upon definition of good and evil, which again, we don’t have. Since ethics have been individualized in the new religion of self, Harm with a capital *H* is difficult to define.

Think about the uproar over immigration and border patrol in my country and the call to “abolish ICE” from the Left and “Make America Great Again” from the Right. Some see illegal immigration as a grave threat to the economic opportunity of the working class and the cultural heritage of our nation; others see opposing undocumented citizens as a form of racism toward people of color, cruelty toward children, and a lost opportunity for diversity.

Clearly, they don’t agree on what constitutes harm.

Or think about one woman who wears a thin-line bikini to the beach and sees that as her right and celebration of female empowerment, but she’s sitting next to a Muslim woman in a hijab who sees a bikini in public as an assault on female dignity, the propagation of a suffocating cultural definition of beauty, and sexual desensitization. They both experience the encounter as harm—one feels oppressed; the other feels ostracized.

Or I think about Nkechi Amare Diallo (legal name, Rachel Anne Dolezal), who served as the president of the NAACP in Spokane, Washington. After she presented for many years as black, a national story broke in 2015. It turns out, she has zero non-European ancestry (that is, she’s white) but she “identifies as black.” As a result, she was not only fired from her job as an instructor of Africana Studies at Eastern Washington University; she was charged by the State of Washington for



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perjury and felony theft by welfare fraud. But rather than recant, she continued to claim she was born with white parents but is actually black in her mind and experience (interestingly, using the exact same logic as transgenderism). So, who is harmed here? The black community by a white woman claiming she is black and is the victim of race-related hate crimes? Or Nkechi/Rachel for being fired on account of her self-determined racial identity?

These are all current, real-life examples of the challenges presented by postmodern ethics and the lack of an agreed-upon definition of either harm or good.

But note carefully that Paul described not one but two categories of desire: the flesh *and the Spirit*.

If the flesh is our shallow, animalistic drive for self-pleasure, the Spirit is our higher and even deeper desire for love and goodness. It's the empowering presence of God deep in the marrow of our bones, gently coaxing us into greater levels of self-giving *agape*.

And which set of desires we give in to will shape the trajectory of our souls and society.

Look at where Paul said the flesh will take us:

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. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Any of this sound familiar?

“Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery”—Tinder, hookup culture, your local bar or club scene.

“Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage”—Twitter, cancel culture, and most of the news.

“Selfish ambition, dissensions, factions”—politics, from office gossip to Washington DC.

“Envy”—the internet, the mall, advertising, and the great envy generator that is Instagram.

“Drunkenness, orgies, and the like”—Netflix, HBO, and others.

Of course, I'm harping on the negative aspects of our culture and these apps; there are still many wonderful things about the West: human rights, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, material well-being, science, medicine, education, the arts, and so on. But we can't ignore the dark side of culture. Paul's point is, *this is the kind of soul and society that is created when given over to the flesh*.

To compare and contrast, look at where the Spirit will take us.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.



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This sounds like a pipe dream to many of us because it's so far removed from our experience, but this is the kind of "fruit" that is grown in the soil of the Spirit. When people walk in the Spirit, this is the kind of people they become—loving, joyful, unanxious, unhurried, helpful, deeply good souls.

Paul ends with this summary:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

We'll come back to Paul's invocation to crucify—that is, put to death—our flesh. For now, I just want you to see one thing: Paul's definitions of freedom and slavery are radically at odds with those of our Western world.

A short word on each. First, freedom . . .

I'm not sure any word in the Christian vocabulary has been more misunderstood than *freedom*.

Philosophers parse out two different types of freedom: negative and positive. Negative freedom is freedom *from*; it's the removal of any and all constraints on our choices. Positive freedom is freedom *for*—not just the permission to choose but the power to choose what is *good*.

Let's take them one after the other. First, negative freedom.

Negative freedom is best exemplified in the following poetic masterpiece from that great Scandinavian intellectual, Princess Elsa (yes, from *Frozen*):

No right, no wrong

No rules for me

I'm free!

Ahh . . .

And you thought I was gonna quote Søren Kierkegaard or Dag Hammarskjöld.

A more serious example comes from the majority opinion of Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, and David Souter in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey* (1992):

At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.

This view of freedom arises out of a postmodern worldview that has no belief in moral absolutes or any ultimate meaning to life beyond personal happiness. In this view, the opposite of freedom is constraint—whether it comes from an external authority source, a sacred text like the Bible, or a binding commitment (such as marriage or parenting). Freedom, in this take, is the "liberation" to do whatever the hell we want. (My word choice is deliberate here.) To define the good for ourselves. To pursue and enjoy and buy and sell and sleep with and do and say whatever we desire, of course, "as long as it doesn't harm anybody."



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This has become the dominant view of freedom in the West. Our children are being educated into this view, one Disney movie at a time.

But that's not Paul's view of freedom. Or Jesus's. Or most luminaries of the human condition prior to the modern era. They put more emphasis on positive freedom. Freedom not just to choose but to choose *the good*. For them, freedom isn't about autonomy from authority but about liberating loving relationships from sin. And positive freedom means we need a kind of power from outside ourselves (think, the "higher power" of Alcoholics Anonymous) to overcome our (strong) desires for self-gratification and fulfill our (deep) desires for self-giving love.

Now let's talk about slavery. I hear the word *slavery* and cringe. As an American, it draws to mind the horror of chattel slavery and the open wound of a nation that four hundred years later has still never had a moment of national repentance. Much less reparations. And to be clear, despite empty attempts by a select few to use the Bible to justify slavery, Scripture teaches the exact opposite. Racial discrimination, dehumanization, and oppression are wrong. Full stop.

Honestly, sometimes I hesitate to even use the word *slavery* in my writing and teaching. But Jesus and the New Testament writers used it constantly. As the descendants of slaves, it was a provocative metaphor for them to employ. Yet they used it for a kind of spiritual slavery—to the devil or simply to one's own flesh.

Peter, in another masterful passage on the flesh that's worth your time to read, wrote about false teachers who "promise . . . freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity." Then he had this great line: "People are slaves to whatever has mastered them."

For the Scripture writers, anything that has control over you—be it an autocratic tyrant, a slave owner, a self-defeating behavior, or an addiction to drugs or alcohol or even your phone—*is your master*. This is why the Hebrew wisdom literature includes sayings about how the wicked are "trapped by evil desires." It's why New Testament theologians portrayed our pre-Jesus life as one where we were "foolish, disobedient, *deceived and enslaved* by all kinds of passions and pleasures."

And it's not just the Scripture writers. Most ancient luminaries would have agreed. Here's Andrew Sullivan, in a piece for *New York* magazine:

For most of the Ancients, freedom was freedom from our natural desires and material needs. It rested on a mastery of these deep, natural urges in favor of self-control, restraint, and education into virtue. They'd look at our freedom and see licentiousness, chaos, and slavery to desire. They'd predict misery not happiness to be the result.

The therapeutic word for this kind of enslavement is a *compulsion*, which is defined as "a very strong feeling of wanting to do something repeatedly that is difficult to control." Compulsion, left unchecked, turns into addiction, which is a form of slavery to desire.

Gerald May, a spiritual director and psychiatrist I love, said it this way:

Regardless of how a compulsion appears externally, underneath it is always robbing us of our freedom. We act not because we have chosen to, but because we have to. We cling to things,



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people, beliefs, and behaviors not because we love them, but because we are terrified of losing them. . . .

In a spiritual sense, the objects of our attachments and addictions become *idols*. We give them our time, energy, and attention whether we want to or not, even—and often especially—when we are struggling to rid ourselves of them. We want to be free, compassionate, and happy, but in the face of our attachments we are clinging, grasping, and fearfully self-absorbed.

This is the root of our trouble.

Notice his language: “We want to be *free*.” He’s using freedom in the positive sense—not freedom to do whatever we want but freedom from our disordered desires to sate our animal appetites in order to be happy.

*This is the main form of bondage in the democratic West.* For all the talk about the danger of tyranny from the Right or illiberalism from the Left or the rising specter of China’s digital censorship, most of that is fear mongering and a red herring.

Slavery to our flesh is the more pressing danger. Maybe even more so than the devil. As the saying goes, “If the devil died today, you’d still sin tomorrow.” The devil can only trick or tempt us, not coerce or control us.

Of course, many Westerners have recently started to use the word *oppression* in a much broader sense. Oppression has been redefined from its original rendering (things like chattel slavery, codified misogyny, and legal discrimination against gay people) to mean any and all forms of external authority or constraint. Be it a law or doctrine or social norm or parent or even God—anything that keeps us from doing what we want.

Now, just to be crystal clear: much external authority *is* oppressive, toxic, and cruel. North Korea comes to mind or ISIS or, closer to home, systemic racism, police brutality, or stifling, 1950s-era gender roles. There is a time and a place to oppose external authority. The uprising of Black Lives Matter in 2020 was a great example. But the problem isn’t external authority per se but the *abuse* of external authority.

As near as I can tell, in biblical theology, external authority is one of the main roles of government in the public sphere and parents in the private. Their job is to restrain the flesh in those who can’t self-restrain—be that a criminal on a bank-robbing spree or simply a two-year-old being, well, two.

In fact, for those of us who follow Jesus, we *choose*, of our own free will, to place ourselves under external authority—that of God himself, as mediated through Scripture, and, to a degree, our church. We do this because we believe authority is not inherently oppressive but, similar to parenting for children, a training ground for us to learn how to master our flesh and grow into people of love. Through trusted sources of authority, we get access to reality. And when authority is used well, with wisdom and compassion, we grow and mature into the kind of people who live in congruence with reality and, as a result, have the capacity to handle even more freedom.



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This is why we don't give gun permits to ten-year-olds, alcohol to teenagers, or drivers' licenses to people with too many DUIs. It's not because those freedoms are bad necessarily but because you first have to become the kind of person who is free *internally* so you can enjoy and express your freedom *externally*.

This is also why the founders of our nation envisioned America as a republic, not technically as a democracy. True democracy has been tried at least twice before, in ancient Greece and Rome. In both attempts, it degenerated into mob rule and from there into tyranny. Anxious to avoid a repeat of history, Edmund Burke laid out the logic behind the American architecture in a letter from 1791:

Men are qualified for civil liberty, in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites [read: flesh]. . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. *Their passions forge their fetters.*

Because freedom without self-mastery is a disaster waiting to happen. Saint Augustine said it well: "Free choice is sufficient for evil, but hardly for good."

All that to say, much of what our world calls freedom is what the Way of Jesus (and many others) calls slavery, and vice versa. Or in Orwellian terms: freedom is tyranny; tyranny is freedom.

Timothy Keller, after decades of living in the secular mecca of New York, astutely summed it up like this:

We see . . . that freedom is not what the culture tells us. Real freedom comes from a strategic loss of some freedoms in order to gain others. It is not the absence of constraints but it is choosing the right constraints and the right freedoms to lose.

The ultimate example of this is love. Is there a greater constraint than a loving relationship? To gain intimacy, we have to give up autonomy. As a mentor said to me just the other day, "Intimacy only resides in the safety of commitment."

I think of the constraint of my marriage, of my responsibility as a father, or even of New Testament ethics. I can fight these constraints. I could even run from them; but my self would never let me escape. I hear Gustave Thibon's haunting warning in my mind: "You feel you are hedged in; you dream of escape; but *beware of mirages*. Do not run or fly away in order to get free. . . . If you fly away from yourself, your prison will run with you."

On the other hand, if I stay in my constraints and let them do their work, if I consider that my duty to follow through on my commitments is just as "authentic" as my feelings or desires, then my constraints have the potential to set me free from the tyranny of my own flesh and forge me into a person of love.

Of course, the original source for this vision of freedom and slavery is Jesus himself, who said both "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" and "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."



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Jesus was incredibly free. As the Oxford theologian Michael Green said, “In this age which values freedom almost more than anything else, Jesus confronts us as the most liberated man who ever lived.”

Another Oxford professor, C. S. Lewis, once said, “The *main* work of life is to *come out* of our selves, out of the little, dark prison we are all born in,” and warned of the danger of “coming to *love* the prison.”

This is the human journey—the exodus from slavery to freedom, with Jesus as our new Moses. Jesus’s offer was, and still is, to rescue and deliver us from the prison of sin and self, to lead us to a new land, a new life.

Which begs the question, How do we become free?

## The law of returns

In her searingly honest memoir, *The Recovering*, Leslie Jamison wrote about how addiction is a kind of ghost haunting the Western world. In her struggle to write a memoir about addiction that was original, she realized it was an impossible task because addiction *is* the human condition: “Addiction is always a story that has already been told, because it inevitably repeats itself, because it grinds down—ultimately, for everyone—to the same demolished and reductive and recycled core: *Desire. Use. Repeat.*”

It turns out that sin makes people the same. When we give in to our flesh, we devolve to a remarkably unoriginal baseline.

Desire.

Use.

Repeat.

We call it addiction; Jesus and Paul called it slavery.

And Paul was not done. He continued his train of thought on freedom in the Spirit versus slavery to the flesh with a final warning for the Galatians.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit,



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from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Recognize this? I'm guessing you do. It's a well-known passage, especially the end where Paul wrote about not growing "weary in doing good." That line is regularly quoted in a sympathy card or an encouraging word from a friend or family member in a rough season of life. And while that's a perfectly legitimate use of the passage, Paul was not actually writing about getting through a hard time; he was writing about fighting our flesh. And in his often-quoted warning, we get a key insight into the mechanism by which we are either enslaved by our flesh or set free by the Spirit.

Notice how our working theory of the three enemies' strategy shows up yet again in Paul's theology:

Do not be deceived.

*Deceitful ideas . . .*

Whoever sows to please their flesh . . .

*That play to disordered desires . . .*

Will reap destruction.

Paul upped the ante here from slavery to full-fledged destruction, connecting the dots to argue that slavery isn't static but dynamic; it leads, in the end, to a kind of ruin.

Thankfully, *the same is true for the Spirit.*

Whoever sows to please the Spirit . . . will reap eternal life.

Many people think that eternal life refers to a *quantity* of life after death, but for the New Testament writers it also meant a *quality* of life that starts *now* for the apprentice of Jesus, grows in scope over a lifetime of apprenticeship, and then continues into eternity.

All because "a man reaps what he sows"—whether that's freedom and life, or their counterparts, slavery and death.

Now, outside the Bible, this idea is called the law of returns. It's less of a distinctly Christian doctrine and more of a truism about the human condition. We hear it in all sorts of sayings:

"What goes around comes around."

"You get what you pay for."

"You get back what you put in."

"No pain, no gain."

"Garbage in, garbage out."



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Karma, poetic justice, “It’s been a long time coming”—all are statements of the law of returns.

Jesus himself taught it with sayings like “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.” Or “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”<sup>5</sup>

It’s a very simple yet profound idea that basically has two parts:

1. *Every cause has an effect.* When you hit a baseball with your bat, the ball goes forward. And it’s just as true of the spiritual world as it is of the “nonspiritual” world. Most of us get this from a pretty young age. But the less intuitive part is this:
2. *The effect is often disproportionate to the cause.* There’s a kind of amplifying effect where our actions yield far more than we expect over time.

Paul wrote to readers living in an agrarian economy, so he used the word picture of sowing and reaping. I’m no farmer, but most of us are familiar enough with the basics of horticulture to get his drift.

1. Sow a rose seed, and you get what? A rose. Sow poison ivy, and you get a noxious weed. But more importantly . . .
2. Sow a *seed*—rose, ivy, apple, grain of wheat—a tiny, black dot smaller than your fingernail, and over time, you get a plant or a tree or even a full-on harvest.

Had Paul been writing to readers in a knowledge economy like ours, my guess is he would have expressed this concept with the word picture of compound interest.

Have you ever sat down with a financial adviser to plan out your long-term financial goals and retirement? No worries if not; I’m aware this is a very middle class example. But I have this vivid memory from my early twenties when I landed my first-ever salaried job. What a great feeling! It wasn’t much, but we had enough each month to pay the bills and a little left over. One of the elders at our church worked as an investment banker, and he was kind enough to sit down with T and me and offer us free financial planning. It was all pretty basic—spend less than you make, invest in a Roth IRA for retirement, and so on. But the part I still remember the most was when he explained compound interest to me. My eyes bulged, not when he explained the theory of it, but when he calculated my finances over the next forty-five years and turned it into a graph.

The balance rises slowly over time. Assuming you don’t start investing until postcollege or your early twenties, there’s not much to get excited about up through your thirties. In your forties, okay, looking better. Then in your fifties, the miracle of compound interest kicks in and, *boom*, all those monies you’ve been patiently stashing away begin to multiply at an exponential rate.

And I remember our elder/adviser (thanks again, Steve) giving me the absolute best piece of advice. He said, “It’s less about how much you invest each month and more about how early you start.” The stats are crazy. Let’s say you invest 5K a year starting from the age of eighteen, and then you stop after ten years (a total investment of 50K). You will still have more money at retirement than if you were to invest 5K a year starting from the age of twenty-eight and not stopping until retirement (a total investment of 200K). With a little sacrifice, even those who live paycheck to paycheck can accumulate modest wealth over a lifetime.



## Summer of Lies – How Lies are Told to Us Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves

This is the miracle of compound interest, which—and here’s my point—is not only a financial reality but also a *life-as-a-whole* reality.

The theologian Cornelius Plantinga said this about Paul’s words to the Galatians:

No matter what we sow, the law of returns applies. Good or evil, love or hate, justice or tyranny, grapes or thorns, a gracious compliment or a peevish complaint—whatever we invest, we tend to get it back with interest. Lovers are loved; haters, hated. Forgivers usually get forgiven; those who live by the sword die by the sword. “God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.”

This is just how things are in the universe. “God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” isn’t a command but a statement about reality. Trying to cheat the law of returns is like trying to defy gravity. Good luck with that.

And Paul applied the law of returns not to a retirement nest egg for people with privilege but to our spiritual formation. By way of reminder, spiritual formation is the process by which we are formed into a certain kind of person, good or evil.

Every time we sow to the flesh—or put another way, every time we give in to our flesh’s desire to sin—we plant something in the soil of our hearts, which then begins to take root, grow, and, eventually, yield the harvest of a deformed nature.

Thankfully, the same is true of the Spirit. Every time you sow to the Spirit and invest the resources of your mind and body into nurturing your inner man or woman’s connection to the Spirit of God, you plant something deep in the humus of your central fulcrum, which, over time, takes root and bears the fruit of a Christlike character.

Again, this is just the way things are.

The popularized idea of Hebb’s law (named after Dr. Donald Hebb) from neuroscience states that “cells that fire together wire together.” Translation: every time you think or do something, it becomes easier to think or do that same thing again, and the more you repeat this process, the harder it is to break the self-perpetuating cycle. Through repetition, thoughts and actions get into your brain’s habit system, the basal ganglia, which is either your best friend or your worst enemy depending on what you sow into it, and are then encoded into the wiring of your brain.

This is why riding a bike is such a breeze. Can you remember the first time you tried to ride a bike? My guess is, it was really hard. You felt clumsy, awkward, and out of control. But the more you practiced, the easier it got. Now, if you’re a good Portland urbanite and regularly ride your bike rather than drive, you don’t even think about it anymore. It’s been encoded into your muscle memory through repetition.

This is also why a few nights ago, while driving to our friends’ new home for dinner, I got into a stimulating conversation with T, only to realize I’d driven in the completely wrong direction, toward their former home. Because I’d driven there a hundred times.



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This is the miracle of the human brain, as designed by God. With our self-determining freedom, we point our mind and body in the right direction, and eventually, *it directs us*, automatically.

Unfortunately, this is also why it's so hard to stop sinning. Because every time we sow to the flesh (that is, sin), we etch a neural pathway into the grooves in our brain, and from there, it begins to shape our muscle memory until we end up squarely in the New Testament's definition of slavery, or what Saint Augustine called the "shackles of gratification."

While recent neuroscience has helped us understand the technical aspects of how this works, the combination of the law of returns, spiritual formation, and slavery to sin is an ancient one.

Saint Augustine wasn't always a saint; he spent decades of his life as a kind of fourth-century playboy, chasing sex, money, and power. Later, in his *Confessions*, a kind of memoir-meets-theology exposé, he said this about his slavery to lust before he became an apprentice of Jesus:

By servitude to passion, habit is formed, and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity. By these links . . . a harsh bondage held me under restraint.

And by "harsh bondage," he was referring not to Caesar or a North African slave trader but to sin. This simple mechanism—of mind to thought to action to habit to character to either slavery or eternal life—is *at the very heart of apprenticeship to Jesus*.

Here's Plantinga to say it better than I can:

A fuller statement of the great law of returns would therefore go something like this: sow a thought, and reap a deed; sow a deed, and reap another deed; sow some deeds, and reap a habit; sow some habits, and reap a character; sow a character, and reap two thoughts. The new thoughts then pursue careers of their own.

The cycle of spiritual formation (or deformation) begins to feed off its own energy and either spiral out of control or culminate in Christlikeness.

Now, to get a little more clarity, let's run this idea through the lens of psychology, philosophy, and theology. While we tend to think of these as separate disciplines, that was not always the case. And while I'm grateful for experts in each field, I can't help but feel something is lost when the human experience is siloed into academic subdisciplines. For most of human history, psychology, philosophy, and theology were all studied as a unified whole and fell under the rubric of spirituality and the domain of the priest or pastor.

So let's do our best to put them back together . . .

First, let's dig into a little psychology.

The journalist Charles Duhigg, in his bestselling book *The Power of Habit*, popularized what psychologists have been saying for years: that our choices become our habits, our habits become our characters, and, as the Roman poet Heraclitus said five hundred years before Christ even walked the earth, character is destiny.



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The things we do, *do something to us*. They shape the people we become.

This idea of the power of habit is an exciting, playful concept when applied to our workout routine, email hours, or workflow, but all too often it's a sobering reality when applied to our spiritual formation.

Well-respected psychologist and researcher Dr. Erich Fromm lived through both world wars and lost his Jewish faith on the other side of that trauma. After researching Nazism for years, he came to the conclusion that no one starts out evil; instead, people become evil “slowly over time through a long series of choices.”<sup>13</sup>

His book *The Heart of Man*, which is an exploration of evil and the human condition, is worth quoting at length:

The longer we continue to make the wrong decisions, the more our heart hardens; the more often we make the right decision, the more our heart softens—or better perhaps, becomes alive. . . .

Each step in life which increases my selfconfidence, my integrity, my courage, my conviction also increases my capacity to choose the desirable alternative, until eventually it becomes more difficult for me to choose the undesirable rather than the desirable action. On the other hand, each act of surrender and cowardice weakens me, opens the path for more acts of surrender, *and eventually freedom is lost*. Between the extreme when I can no longer do a wrong act and the extreme when I have lost my freedom to right action, there are innumerable degrees of freedom of choice. . . .

Most people fail in the art of living not because they are inherently bad or so without will that they cannot lead a better life; they fail because they do not wake up and see when they stand at a fork in the road and have to decide.

It's our daily, seemingly insignificant decisions that eventually sculpt our characters and harden them into stone or free them to flourishing.

Take the all-too-common example of an affair, one of the few sexual taboos that's still generally recognized (though that's changing). In all my years as a pastor, I've never known anyone who just woke up one morning in a happy, healthy marriage and had an affair that night. In every case, the affair started not with the act of infidelity but with a thousand earlier acts. The choice to skip date night, to quit couples counseling, to make a flirtatious comment to a coworker, to allow a certain kind of film into the entertainment queue. The affair itself was the result of not one but a thousand choices, made over a long period of time, which all built to a head and brought ruin from the substrata to the surface of a life.

Or take a less dramatic and far more humdrum example like, say, negativity. I can speak to this one as an expert. With every decision we make to complain, criticize, play the victim, focus on the negative, and so on, we become more and more the kind of person who is *by nature* negative, grouchy, unhappy, and unpleasant to be around, until eventually we lose the very capacity to live happily, gratefully, and full of wonder at our lives in God's good world.



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Here C. S. Lewis’s insight is devastating:

Hell . . . begins with a grumbling mood, and yourself still distinct from it: perhaps criticizing it. . .

But there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no *you* left to criticize the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine.

But again, the reciprocal is true as well. The daily decision to rejoice—to cultivate a way of seeing our lives in God’s good world, not through the lens of our phones, news apps, or flesh, but through gratitude, celebration, and unhurried delight—will over time form us into joyful, thankful people who deeply enjoy life with God and others. What starts as an act of the will eventually turns into our inner nature. What begins with a choice eventually becomes a character.

Trust me, I’ve spent years undoing neural pathways of perfectionism, cynicism, and negative rumination I laid down in my college years and early twenties. And with each passing year of apprenticeship to Jesus, my mind is further and further from hell and closer to the place where God’s will is done.

This is the power of our choices, decisions, and habits. For good or for evil. To index us toward freedom or slavery.

We make our decisions, and then our decisions make us.

In the beginning we have a choice, but eventually, we have a character.

On that note, let’s move on to philosophy.

One of the long-standing questions of philosophy is that of free will. What exactly is free will? How does it jibe with God’s sovereignty, nature’s laws, and our genetic programming? Cue the running debates in both academia and the church.

But most philosophers agree that human beings have selfdetermining freedom, a type of freedom that goes beyond instinct and impulse. We’re not run by our primal, evolutionary drives or animal brains. When Darwinian materialists claim that human beings are animals or primates, they are right in that we are very much like the animals, particularly the order known as primates. We eat, sleep, mate, fight, fear, get sick, and die. But the Darwinists have to admit that, unlike the animals, we have the capacity to *override* these drives.

Animals can’t turn the other cheek or love their enemies. They can’t restrain their sex drives out of care for their mates’ emotional conditions that day. They have no way to interrupt the cycle of “hungry feeling” straight to “eat.” Or “horny feeling” straight to “mate.”

Humans can override these drives. We can decide to eat a salad for lunch or not have an affair. Or at least, we can decide that at first. But here’s the contribution of philosophy to our conversation: our level of self-determining freedom *does not stay the same over a lifetime*; it goes up or down depending on the choices we make.



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We become freer to love or more enslaved to our flesh with each choice.

Have a look at this from Greg Boyd, educated at Princeton and Yale. His book *Satan and the Problem of Evil* is the best case I've ever read against the ever-popular "God is in control" mantra. In his section on philosophy he wrote this about spiritual formation:

Self-determining freedom ultimately gives way either to a higher form of freedom—the freedom to be creatures whose love defines them—or the lowest form of bondage—the inability to participate in love. We either become beings who are irrevocably open or irrevocably closed to God's love. The former is eternal life; the latter is eternal death.

C. S. Lewis, another brilliant mind who lived through both world wars but unlike Fromm became a Christian as a result, said it this way:

Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.

He went on to say we are all becoming either "immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." Of people who refuse Jesus's invitation to follow him into love, he said, "First they will not, in the end, they cannot."<sup>19</sup>

The insight of philosophy is this: *our freedom expands or shrinks with each decision we make.*

This is why the older you get, the harder it is to change. Think of the saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." Who says that? Not young people. Young people tend to think of human nature as more pliable, less fixed. That's because when you're younger, it is. When you're in your twenties, you have this nagging sense of *Who will I become?*

To my readers under thirty, please listen carefully: that feeling goes away.

By the time you're forty, you're more likely to think, *Well, this is who I became.*

All my grandparents have passed away, but my wife has a ninety-eight-year-old grandmother, Evelyn, a devout Catholic who's been following Jesus far longer than I've been alive.

Last Thanksgiving, I sat with her for about thirty minutes before dinner. She had just taken a bad fall, spent time in the hospital, and was sitting in a wheelchair in pain. On top of that, she deeply misses her husband of fifty-eight years, who died ten long years ago. But try as I did, *I could not get her to complain.* She was joyful, grateful, present to the moment. The worst thing I could coax from her was this fantastic line: "Getting old is for the birds."

She's free.



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Free from the slavery of an emotional state that's dependent on her circumstances. Free from the need to be young or beautiful or married or wealthy to enjoy her life in God's world.

Evelyn is a flesh-and-blood example of what philosophers argue for in the abstract: the longer we choose a habit or even just a disposition—like negativity, gratitude, worry, or joy—the less likely we are to ever change.

Finally, theology.

One of the great questions of theology is over hell. What is it, exactly? What does the Bible *actually* teach on the matter, and what is speculative? Who goes there, or is that even the right language? Does it last forever or just for a time?

And of course, the perennial question, How could a loving God send anybody to hell?

Without doubt, there are all sorts of goofy and, frankly, ridiculous ideas about hell. They go back at least as far as Dante's *Inferno* (as a book of poetry, spirituality, and social critique, a masterpiece; as a biblical theology of hell, a misleading work of conjecture) and lead all the way up to interstate billboards with blue clouds behind the word *heaven* and red flames behind the word *hell*, overlaid with the piercing question, "If you were to die tonight . . ."

(No, I'm not making this up. They've been along Interstate 5 in Oregon for years.)

I've zero desire to get into the debate over eternal conscious torment (ECT) versus annihilationism versus second-chance Christian universalism versus Unitarian universalism versus Catholic purgatory. . . . Deep breath. But let me just make one observation: what's often missing from the long-running debate over hell and how a loving God could send people there is the rather simple observation that, for some people, *heaven would be a kind of hell*. Whatever the kingdom of heaven turns out to be in all its fullness, it will be, for sure, a community of people who live under King Jesus's rule.

It's dishonest and disrespectful to people's human dignity to just assume that everyone would want that.

Most of my secular friends seem quite content to live without God. They aren't sitting around in existential angst, pining away over the God-shaped hole in their hearts. Many of them seem very happy to live without God and by their own moral vision. To marry, raise children, do something meaningful with their lives, and then face death when it inevitably comes. They don't give off the "I'm miserable" vibe. It's more the "where are we going to brunch this Sunday?" vibe. And many of them are good, intelligent, lovely people that I respect and enjoy.

But I have little reason to believe that people who have zero desire to live with Jesus and his community now would want to be conscripted into that forever.

Now, you might say, "That's because they don't realize what they're missing. Once they see reality for what it actually is, once the demonic deception is cleared away for good, everyone will want to live with Jesus in his new world."



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That may well be true, in which case this next bit is a red herring. But let me offer another perspective by way of an analogy: Florida.

Yes, Florida.

To all my readers from Florida, I apologize for the next few paragraphs, but keep reading; you come out on top by the end.

I'm West Coast born and raised: temperate weather, low humidity, third wave coffee, #westcoastisthebestcoast.

None of which exist in Florida.

My first trip to Florida was in the month of June. Humidity was 80 percent. Daytona Beach. The aesthetics of the city, as you would imagine, fit the home-of-NASCAR stereotype. There was no single-origin coffee shop for a hundred miles. The heat was *stifling*. This was a few years ago, when skinny jeans were extra skinny, and I just remember trying to walk from my hotel, across the parking lot, to an event center where I was speaking.

*Squeak, squeak, squeak.*

I must have looked like a warm-weather penguin waddling across the road.

Oh, don't forget there are alligators. That eat people.

Now, I'm told by my East Coast and Midwestern friends that many people's dream is to retire to a golf course in Florida. There are literally people right now slugging it out through winter in west Michigan, taking the overtime shift at the plant and forgoing the car payment just to save their pennies to someday move to the Floridian green and take it easy. For some people, that would be a kind of heaven on earth.

Not for me.

It would be much more like the other place.

I wilt in humidity. I can't stand golf. Lest you golfers judge me, I tried to like golf. Several of my best friends are obsessed with the sport. I love the idea of spending days with them walking a beautiful, green course, talking about life. But I found it tedious and infuriating. In fact, I remember a decision point where I thought to myself, *Self, you could become the kind of person who likes golf, but it would take thousands of hours of practice, dedication, money, and time.*

*Nah . . .*

The reality is, through a long series of decisions made over many years, some by me and others by my ancestors who immigrated to California, I have not become the kind of person for whom living on a golf course in Florida would be heaven on earth. I would not even have the capacity to enjoy what other people have been tirelessly working for their entire lives.



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You see where I'm going with this. Willard used to say, "Hell is just the best God can do for some people." I think he meant a blatant racist or a pathological liar or a vehement God hater would be just miserable in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>21</sup>

Could it be that death simply seals the trajectory a soul is already on, toward slavery and death or freedom and life? Timothy Keller defined hell as "one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity."

Again, Lewis: "It's not a question of God 'sending' us to Hell. In each of us there is something growing up which will of itself *be Hell* unless it is nipped in the bud."

I grew up in a Protestant home, so I always assumed the Catholic idea of purgatory was nonsense. (To my Catholic readers, please forgive my crassness.) "Where is *that* in the Bible?" I asked.

And yet I always wondered over the conundrum of free will. The way *Genesis* tells the story, the main reason evil is in the world is because humans are free, but we've abused that freedom and used it for evil. But in *Revelation*, there's no more evil in the world even though humans are there. Does that mean we're no longer free?

The evangelical view seems to be that upon death some kind of switch is flipped and we become incapable of doing evil anymore yet somehow retain our free will. I never really read this in the Bible but simply assumed something like it must be the plan.

It quite possibly is.

But a few years ago, I read an essay by Ronald Rolheiser (my favorite Catholic writer) on purgatory that blew my mind. He made the most compelling case for it, not based on the Bible—he was very honest that this idea *isn't* in the Bible—but based on logic and common sense. To become the kind of people who (1) will even enjoy the kingdom of heaven and (2) will steward our self-determining freedom for good and not evil, we must be "purged" (hence the name *purgatory*), set free from sin's hold on our souls, so we can actually live free in God's new world. It's the best explanation of purgatory this Protestant has ever heard.

Now, I'm not arguing for purgatory. I'm just saying, regardless of who is right about how free will works in eternity, it seems like the time to start down this path is *now*. What if fighting our flesh is a kind of voluntary purgatory in the present life? And what if following Jesus is training now for life forever, a sort of school where we become the kind of people who are so free that we are fully capable to "reign for ever and ever"?

This is the power and potential of freedom. And the danger.

Again, it's bad news or great news depending on what we sow. Every thought, every desire we follow, every choice we make is an investment in our future, in the kind of people we want to become. How do you grow a forest? One seed at a time. How do you grow a life? One tiny, unglamorous decision at a time.

So, take care what you sow, dear friend. Give careful thought to what you think about, what you say, what you do, whom you do it with. You are becoming who you will be forever.



Character is destiny.

## So I say, live by the Spirit

Growing up, I was a sensitive child. I can relate to the opening line of Ruth Burrows's autobiography, "I was born into this world with a tortured sensitivity." I was also a bit wild, so I regularly got in trouble and afterward felt very bad.

I had a lot of kind people, including my kind parents, attempt to assuage my guilt.

"Guilt is from the devil, not Jesus."

Jesus "paid it all" and took my place, they said. "You don't need to feel bad about your sin."

"You're a good person."

Yet this always felt a bit off to me. It was appealing, yes, but was it true?

The New Testament writers never claim that all guilt is bad. In fact, many scholars argue that a number of Greek words translated into English as "sin" or "debt" or "fault" would be better translated as "guilt."

This is borderline heresy in the modern West where, for a generation raised on a steady diet of self-esteem, the ultimate evil is to feel bad about yourself. But near as I can tell, there are two types of people who no longer feel any guilt:

*Saints*—people who have achieved John Wesley's "Christian perfection" and sin so infrequently they live a kind of guilt-free existence.

And *sociopaths*. Sociopaths sin with impunity. They do whatever the heck they want and don't feel bad afterward. Those of the mild variety lie about coworkers to angle for their jobs and then go out for a beer. Those of the more extreme type murder someone and then . . . go out for a beer. No guilt. No lingering bad feeling. No tossing and turning in bed that night. As Paul would say, their "consciences have been seared as with a hot iron," and "they have lost connection with the head."<sup>4</sup>

I would argue a more helpful way to frame the dichotomy is to delineate between guilt and shame.

Guilt is about the *what*; shame is about the *who*.



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Guilt says, “What I did was bad.”

Shame: “I am bad.”

Guilt thinks to itself, *What I did was unloving, and I need to make it right.*

Shame thinks, *I am unlovable, and there’s no hope for me.*

Shame is almost never helpful, and most of the time it’s toxic. We all live from an identity, or a sense of self, to give us belonging in a community and a purpose in life. Shame says our identity is bad, unlovable, or irredeemable. So as a result, we live out that identity, which is a lie, and—surprise, surprise—we live badly.

But I would argue that guilt can actually be a good thing. There are times and situations when guilt is the emotionally healthy, mature, loving response to our own sin. Guilt is to the soul what pain is to the body. A kind of moral discomfort. Pain is bad only when it goes on indefinitely; in the short term, it’s a gift from God to our bodies, a messenger whose job is to tell us we need to fix something and fast.

Guilt is unhealthy only when we wallow in it. When it lingers in the back of our minds, a kind of permanent fixture in our thought lives, playing the role of the accuser. But it’s just as unhealthy to ignore or suppress it through self-talk, a wellmeaning but misguided friend, or simple distraction via our cultural narcotics of choice.

All healthy people experience occasional guilt. Because all people, even the healthy ones, make mistakes. We tear the moral fabric of our world. Guilt is a gentle hint we need to repair something. It’s also a part of how we mature into people of love.

All parents know this. All parents secretly (or not so secretly) look for an appropriate level of guilt when their kids mess up and let that set the tone of their discipline.

The Comers are pacifists in theology but not always in practice. We have two wonderful boys, and I won’t name names, but recently one of them hit the other. A heated debate over which brother owned a certain Lego turned physical. It happens. Brothers! But when I sat down with the offending brother, as a loving father I *wanted* him to feel guilty. Not because I’m sadistic and enjoy watching him feel miserable but because I love him and want him to grow and mature into a person of love.

In fact, a secret that parents keep from their children is that our discipline is often commensurate with the level of guilt we intuit from the child. If children feel horrible and are berating themselves for their mistakes, we tend to go really easy on them and play the role of compassionate comforter and identity truth teller more than the parental version of judge and jury. But if they blame shift and downplay and don’t really seem to care that they hurt somebody, we up the level of our discipline, with the goal not of punishment but of purgation.

We do this not because we’re cruel but because we’re loving. And we know that if they pick up the habit of guilt suppression (which is based in self-deception), they could master the art of drowning out their consciences’ persistent but quiet voices, dulling their sensitivity to moral pain, and that could usher ruin into their lives and our world.



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All that to say, if all this talk about the flesh has you feeling bad, give careful thought to what you do with that feeling. If a certain habit, entertainment choice, budget line item, or relationship has been itching at the back of your mind, I invite you to pay attention to it. Not to wallow in it or muzzle it but to open your heart to however the Spirit of God is coming to you in it.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux’s beautiful line comes to mind: “If you are willing to serenely bear the trial of being displeasing to yourself, then you will be for Jesus a pleasant place of shelter.”

So, if we’re feeling any of the healthy kind of guilt right now, let’s do something about it.

On that note, one final question remains: *How?* How do we fight our flesh?

Again, this is where Paul’s work is incredibly helpful. We skipped over his language at the end of Galatians 5 about how to fight our flesh, and now we’re ready to circle back:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

**Step one: we are to “crucify” our flesh**

In Paul’s world, crucifixion was the most brutal, visceral, and emotional form of execution known to man. It’s how Jesus died. And it’s how we fight our flesh. We don’t coddle it, baby it, or placate it—we *crucify* it. My Calvinist friends use the word *mortification*. It’s a fourteenth-century word from the Latin root *mors*, meaning “death.” (*Mors* is also the root of the noun *mortal*.) We are to mortify our flesh, as in, kill it.

As we saw in the last chapter, the gospel of sin management doesn’t work because the flesh isn’t a static reality but a dynamic one. In Genesis 4, the story about Cain killing his brother Abel in the wake of Adam and Eve’s sin, God described sin as a beast within, and that beast shrinks or grows depending on whether we starve or feed it.

Again, this is where I find neurobiology’s idea of an animal brain helpful, secular as it may sound. Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz, whom I quoted earlier, in a letter to a fatherless young man he was mentoring, said it this way:

Neither should the body be indulged and catered to, because the more you pamper and submit to its desires, the more they grow into insatiable cravings. (A potato chip—or an orgasm—tends to make you want another one.) And that way lies being nothing more than an animal.

Every time we sow to the flesh, we feed that animalistic part of us. As it grows, it takes more control over our freedom and attempts to eat us alive from the inside. This is why Peter, writing about “those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh” said that, in time, they become like “unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct . . . and like animals they too will perish.” Harsh as his language sounds, he wasn’t being mean, just honest—and loving. The more people indulge their flesh, the more it takes over their whole beings and turns them into brutes, however socially sophisticated they may remain.



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This is why Paul didn't mess around. You don't manage your flesh or simply keep it in check—you launch a militant campaign to kill it.

But still, the question remains, How?

**Step two: “let us keep in step with the Spirit”**

Now, this, my friends, is gold.

This command to “keep in step with the Spirit” is the last of three synonymous commands in Galatians 5, which come at the beginning, middle, and end of Paul's teaching on the flesh.

1. “Walk by the Spirit” (v16).
2. Be “led by the Spirit” (v18).
3. “Live by the spirit” and “keep in step with the Spirit” (v25).

This is Paul's unique contribution to our subject matter. As I said before, all sorts of other religious, philosophical, and even scientific traditions have a similar category to the New Testament idea of the flesh versus the Spirit. Non-Christian and even nonreligious people all recognize a hierarchy of desires, many of which are in conflict with each other and many of which need to be denied. This is not a Christian problem or a new problem but a human and ancient one.

What was new was Paul's solution. For Paul, the way we fight the flesh and win is not through willpower but through the *Spirit's power*.

He urges us not to white-knuckle it, slap our faces, or pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, but simply to “live by the Spirit.”

Now, willpower is not a bad thing at all. In fact, as we follow Jesus, our capacity to choose the good should grow and expand with each passing year. Things that once were excruciatingly difficult and required high-touch accountability and constant vigilance should hopefully become easy—the natural outworking of Christlike character formed in us over time.

But most of us aren't there yet; I'm sure not. So here's my strategy: when willpower works, I use it.

It just doesn't work as often as I'd like. At least not on my deepest problems.

Willpower versus a second cookie is one thing.

But willpower versus triggered trauma? Or willpower versus addiction? Or willpower versus a father wound? *It doesn't stand a chance*. As long as a temptation is just interfacing with the prefrontal cortex, willpower is a great resource to draw on. But the moment we're dealing with the amygdala, with the part of the brain or soul that is deeply wounded or hardwired in sinful ways of being, we are outmanned and outgunned by the flesh.

If you're trying to use willpower against your self-defeating behavior that's rooted in trauma or past pain and you feel like you're failing, don't beat yourself up; change your strategy. Willpower is not the answer to your problem.



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Leslie Jamison said of overcoming her addiction,

I needed to believe in something stronger than my willpower. . . .

This willpower was a fine-tuned machine, fierce and humming, and it had done plenty of things—gotten me straight A's, gotten my papers written, gotten me through cross-country training runs—but when I'd applied it to drinking, the only thing I felt was that I was turning my life into a small, joyless, clenched fist. The Higher Power that turned sobriety into more than deprivation was simply *not me*. That was all I knew.

To win, we need access to a power that is beyond us. We need an ally in the fight to come alongside us and turn the tide. That power is the Spirit of Jesus.

And how do we access this power?

Simple: via the practices.

Willpower is at its best when it does what it *can* (direct my body into spiritual practices) so the Spirit's power can do what willpower *can't* (overcome the three enemies of the soul).

We've been working under the hypothesis that spiritual disciplines are spiritual warfare. Put another way, the practices of Jesus are how we fight the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Think of the work we did in the last chapter on the power of habit and how the things we do, do something to us. The practices of Jesus are effectively counterhabits to those of our flesh. They are habits based on the life and teachings of Jesus that resist the habits of our flesh. Every time you practice a habit of Jesus, your spirit (one way to think of your spirit is as your inner willpower muscle) gets a little stronger and your flesh (your inner animal) gets a little weaker.

But, that said, the practices aren't *just* counterhabits to work out our willpower muscles. They are the means by which we access a power from beyond us. They enable us to live from an animating energy and pneumatic force that is far more powerful than any inner resource we could possibly draw on. That's why many call them *spiritual* disciplines—they are spiritual in that they open us to the Spirit, whom the respected Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee defined as "God's *empowering* presence."

In Romans 8, another passage on the flesh, Paul connected the dots between Jesus's death and resurrection and our new capacity for victory in our struggle against the flesh. He wrote that, prior to Jesus,

the law was powerless . . . because it was weakened by the flesh.

Meaning, humans could not live out God's commands because their will-to-good was sabotaged by their flesh. But God saved us

by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering . . . in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who *do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*.



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I added the italics to show you the synergy in Paul's thought. The solution to our flesh's control over us isn't to buck up but to rely on the Spirit. Paul then went on to say we live "according to the Spirit" through the simple act of setting our minds on God:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

It's as simple as that: small, regular habits/practices/disciplines that open our minds up to the Spirit and close them off to the flesh.

Let me highlight two I think are especially important as pertaining to the flesh: fasting and confession.

***First, fasting***

No practice of Jesus is more alien or neglected in the modern Western church than fasting. In the post-Enlightenment intellectual landscape, where human beings are viewed as *res cogitans*, or "thinking things," the idea of drawing on the Spirit's power not through your mind but through your *stomach* sounds absurd. Few followers of Jesus regularly fast anymore.

And yet, until recent history, fasting was one of the core practices of the Way of Jesus. For hundreds of years, the church would fast twice a week: Wednesdays and Fridays. That was just what you did if you were a Christian. In the fourth century, when the church developed the practice of Lent, it was originally a fast similar to Islam's Ramadan. As a lead-up to Easter, followers of Jesus would wake and go without food until sunset. For forty days. Every year.

Please note: go without *food*.

I regularly hear people use the term *fasting* for other forms of abstinence, such as "I'm fasting from social media/TV/online shopping."

That's great, but it's not fasting; it's abstinence, and it's still a helpful practice with a long-standing tradition in the Way of Jesus. I'm all for it. But fasting is a practice by which you deny your body *food* in an attempt to starve your flesh. It is a psychosomatic act, in the true sense of the word, that's built around a biblical theology of the soul as your whole person. Contrary to what many Western Christians assume, your soul isn't the immaterial, invisible part of you (a better word for that is your spirit or your will); it's your *whole* person, which includes all of your body—your brain, nervous system, and stomach.

Now, just to make sure we're clear, your body is not evil. This is where the medieval monastic movement got it wildly wrong. Your body is a gift, as is pleasure in the right time and place and way. But your body, like the rest of your soul, has been corrupted by sin. As a result, your body often works against you in your fight with the flesh, via your sex drive, fight-or-flight system, or survival instincts.

Fasting is a way to turn your body into an ally in your fight with the flesh rather than an adversary.



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If you don't believe me, just try it. See what happens.

Now, by way of warning, at first, fasting likely won't feel like this great access to power. Richard Foster astutely observed, "More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us." Very few practices have the capacity to humble us as does fasting. When you begin fasting, it's common to feel sad, even anxious, or just plain hangry. With regular practice, these feelings (mostly) go away and are replaced by joy, contentment, a sense of intimacy with God, and spiritual power. But it takes a while to wean your soul off its addiction to the Western gods of pleasure, instant gratification, and sensory appetites. The first thing it normally does is reveal where you are still in bondage.

Fasting trains our bodies *to not get what they want*. At least, not all the time.

This is yet another reason why, in a culture so run by feelings and desire, fasting is a bizarre idea even to Christians. We assume that we must get what we want to be happy, and by *want*, we often mean what our flesh wants.

This simply isn't true.

With fasting, we decide of our own accord to not give our bodies what they want (food); as a result, when somebody else decides to not give us what we want (or life circumstances decide, or even God decides . . .), we don't freak out, rage, or go ballistic on Twitter. We've trained our souls to be happy and at peace, *even when we don't get our way*.

This is why fasting—far from a medieval form of self-hate— when done rightly is a pathway to freedom. Fasting is practicing suffering; it's teaching our bodies to suffer. Suffering is unavoidable in life; joy is not. In fasting we're learning how to suffer with joy.

What Scripture reading is to our fight with the devil (a way to fill our minds with truth to combat his lies), fasting is to our fight with the flesh (a way to starve our flesh and weaken its hold over us).

I occasionally give spiritual direction, and whenever I'm sitting with a spiritual friend who is struggling with any kind of habitual sin, I recommend he take up regular (ideally weekly) fasting. *Especially* if the sin is sexual in nature. Not because fasting is a silver bullet; it's not. I'm well aware that most addictions and most any form of self-destructive behavior that is impervious to our attempts to change are rooted in trauma. Wickedness is tied to woundedness. We all need healing. Much could be said about that. But still, through fasting, perhaps more than any other practice, the power of the Holy Spirit to break the chains of sin is released into our bodies themselves.

I just had breakfast (yes, the irony) with a dear friend who recently began fasting every Wednesday. He's a foodie, type seven on the Enneagram, wine aficionado, fun-loving kind of personality, so when I asked him how it's going, I was expecting a negative report. Instead, he gushed that it's one of the most transformative things he's ever done.

I should not have been surprised.

Is it any wonder that when Jesus went toe to toe with the devil, he was fasting? In fact, it was after forty days of fasting. It's easy to misinterpret this story; I did for years. I took it to mean the devil



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waited until Jesus was exhausted and weak to make his move. But this is a gross misunderstanding of the reciprocal relationship between fasting and spiritual power. Forty days in, Jesus was at the *height* of his spiritual power and was able to wisely discern the devil's lies and dismiss his temptations with adroit skill.

Such is the potential of fasting.

### ***Second, confession***

For us Westerners in the Protestant stream of the church, this is perhaps the second most neglected of the practices of Jesus. Similar to fasting, confession was abused by the Catholic church in the late Middle Ages (and still is in parts of the church today). It was contorted into a private, therapeutic thing between you and the priest, not the community, with a screen to shield your identity, and essentially functioned as a get-out-of-jail-free card for the penitent. In its worst form, it was a means for spiritual abuse or for funding a corrupt clergy. As you would imagine, it was one of many things that drew the ire of Martin Luther and the Reformers, and as a result, many Protestants just threw it out entirely.

Yet it was the *abuse* of the practice the Reformers were reacting against, not the proper use.

What's left of the practice in the Protestant church is usually around the Lord's Supper, where people say sorry to God in their minds before they receive the bread and the cup at church. The problem with this way of practicing confession is similar to that of the medieval church—it's private. For confession to yield not just forgiveness but *freedom*, it must drag our sins into the light, not keep them in solitary confinement.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it so well:

Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him. . . . Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person.

That's a quote from *Life Together*, widely considered one of the best books ever written on community. Based on Bonhoeffer's experience of living at Finkenwalde, an intentional community he set up to resist the Third Reich's cancerous influence on the church, he came to see confession as a crucial aspect of community or, for that matter, any relationship.

Because we find our deepest intimacies in our greatest vulnerabilities.

Jesus's brother James commanded us to "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

Notice: *to each other*.

A raw power and genuine freedom come when you name your sin in the presence of loving community. Just the act of naming your sin out loud to people you know and trust has the power to break chains.



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This is why saying sorry to God in your mind as you receive the Lord's Supper (as it's practiced in most churches today) does not have nearly the power to set us free as an AA meeting, where you sit down, often in a dingy church basement full of ordinary people drinking bad coffee and struggling with sin, and say, "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm an alcoholic. Last night I got drunk."

The latter is far closer to the New Testament practice of confession than most of what we do in church. It comes as no surprise that "the Big Book of AA was initially called *The Way Out*"—not just out of drinking, but out of "the claustrophobic crawl space of the self."

My agenda here isn't to devalue communion *at all*; it's to move you toward the practice of true confession in community.

But here's the main thing I hope you take away from this chapter: the way we fight and overcome our flesh isn't through willpower but through the Spirit's power. And we get access to that power via the practices of Jesus. Fasting and confession are just two especially helpful practices in our war with the flesh, but there are many more you can experiment with. The key is to find ways of living in reliance on the Spirit's presence and power in your ordinary life.

If you hear nothing else, hear this: we all face a war with our flesh. It's inescapable. *But it doesn't have to be a tug-of-war* where both sides are equally matched and, no matter how hard you fight, you just remain in a kind of stasis, exhausted and resigned to mediocrity.

To circle back to the line we began part 2 with, "The heart wants what it wants." There's truth in this statement for sure. Specifically, we can't control our hearts' desires. The heart has a mind of its own, literally. But what this statement completely misses is that while we can't control our desires, we can *influence* them and come to the point where *they no longer control us*.

Desire is a sibling to emotion and functions in a similar way. There's no switch for emotion. When we're sad, scared, or angry, we can't just flip on the happy switch and make all our unwanted feelings disappear. But that doesn't mean we have no say (or responsibility) over our emotions. As a general rule, our feelings follow our thinking, so if you want to augment your emotions, change your thought life. We can't change what we feel, but we can, within reason, change what we think about.

Desire works along the same lines. We can't control what we desire, but we can control what habits we give our minds and bodies to and, in doing so, index our hearts away from the flesh and toward the Spirit. This is under our power and therefore a form of responsibility before God and our fellow humans.

This is why the writer James was careful to note that while desire itself is not necessarily a form of sin, we still bear culpability before God for the kinds of desires we engender.

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.



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James was both warning us of the danger of desire left unchecked and calling us to train our desires to love and want what the Spirit loves and wants. This is what the library of Scripture calls guarding your heart. Like a sentry, we are to police the flow of traffic into our inner beings. The heart, in biblical literature, is the trifecta of a person's thinking, feeling, and desire. Or in other language, the mind, the emotions, and the will. We must guard all three.

Henri Nouwen wrote, "The heart is the seat of the will . . . the central and unifying organ of our personal life. Our heart determines our personality and is, therefore, not only the place where God dwells but also the place to which Satan directs his fiercest attacks." This is why we must guard against fleshly desires "which wage war against your soul"<sup>24</sup> and the "many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."

And we do this through the practice of habits. Through our regular acts of mind and body we either sow to the flesh and in doing so further entrench our slavery to it, or we sow to the Spirit and increase our capacity to live freely and joyfully with God in his world.

Therefore, we must run every habit, every thought, every relationship—*everything*—through this simple grid:

*Does this sow to my flesh or my spirit?*

*Will this make me more enslaved or more free?*

*More beastly or more human?*

Remember, the key to spiritual formation is to change what we *can* control (our habits) to influence what we *can't* control (our flesh).

In closing, I'm struck by one of the last things Paul said in his *Galatians* passage on the flesh:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Notice again that Paul's exhortation isn't to not quit a hard job or to keep following your dream to start a small business. In context, the "doing good" he's referring to is the fight against our flesh.

The first application of this beautiful line is to not give up in our struggle to get free of our animal natures. Because—and here's the most beautiful thing—"at the proper time we will reap a harvest." Again, in context, he means the harvest of Christlike character and freedom. Back to the compound interest metaphor, if we keep depositing our resources, it's only a matter of time . . .

As I write this, I just came off a pretty rough week. A few interpersonal things had me really stressed out, and by the time my Sabbath rolled around, I was really feeling it. I've had an adulthood-long struggle with anxiety that, while better than it's ever been, still rears its ugly head on a regular basis. Sitting there on my Sabbath, on my back deck on a beautiful day, I would love to tell you I was just basking in the shalom of God, deeply happy and at peace. I wasn't. I was stressed out, mad at a friend, and feeling tension all over my body. As a nice addition, I was feeling anxiety over my anxiety, and a deep shame over my inability to just let go. And in that moment of



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discouragement, when I was literally thinking, *Will I ever mature past anxiety's hold on my soul?* I felt the Spirit bring to mind my friend Steve's graph of compound interest and then apply it, not to my retirement, but to my peace.

Here's John Mark and peace in his twenties . . . Not much to look at. A very anxious young man with a "tortured sensitivity."

Here's John Mark and peace in his thirties . . . Better, but still a long way to go.

Forties . . . Wow, I see a noticeable uptick. But still a lot of road ahead.

But by the time I'm in my sixties? *Deep shalom, friends, deep shalom.* Come what may, my soul is at peace in God.

So, with that vision of my future self in my mind, I practice Sabbath every week. I can't flip a switch and control my anxiety, but I can turn off my phone. I can rest and trust that, in time, God will utilize the practice of Sabbath to fill me with more of his Spirit, set me free from anxiety, and yield a harvest of peace in my soul. I'm practicing the Way of Jesus, as best I can, and playing the long game.

My father has been a pastor for longer than I've been alive. On his desk is a little frame with one simple sentence, a daily reminder: *Take the long view.*

What are you facing right now? Where do you need a way out? A thought pattern you just can't break free of? A compulsion or addiction that's killing your joy? A character flaw that leaks out in embarrassing ways, despite your best efforts to nip it in the bud?

How do you feel about it? Sad? Defeated? Resigned?

Are there areas of your life and character where you've lowered your expectations? Settled for the tug-of-war rather than victory? Grown numb?

Don't.

Don't grow weary in doing good.

It will come, in time.

Take the long view.

## Part 2 step sheet

### Definitions:

- The flesh**—our base, primal, animalistic drives for self-gratification, especially as pertains to sensuality and survival
- The Spirit**—God's empowering presence in us



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- **Freedom in modern Western use**—the permission to do whatever we want
- **Freedom in the New Testament**—the power to want and do what is good
- **Love in the modern Western use**—desire; often sexual desire
- **Love in the New Testament**—the passionate commitment of the heart to delight in the soul of another and to will that person’s good ahead of your own, no matter the cost to yourself
- **The law of returns**—every action has a reaction, and those reactions are often disproportionate to the action.

**Key texts to meditate on:** Galatians 5–6; Romans 8v1–13; and 1 Peter 2v9–22

**Working theory of the devil’s strategy:** deceitful ideas that play to disordered desires that are normalized in a sinful society

**Working theory of the law of returns applied to spiritual formation:** sow a thought, reap an action; sow action, reap another action; sow some actions, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny, either in slavery to the flesh or freedom in the Spirit.

**Working theory of how we fight the flesh:** We feed our spirits and starve our flesh by practicing habits laid down by Jesus, specifically fasting and confession of sin. As we do this over time, we not only grow our own willpower muscles but, more importantly, we open our minds and bodies to a power that is beyond us—that of God’s Spirit.

**Key practices to overcome the flesh:** fasting and confession

**In summary:** The devil’s deceitful ideas are not random; they appeal to our disordered desires, or what the New Testament writers call the flesh. The flesh is our animal side, the primal, instinctual drives of self-gratification and self-preservation. The solution is not to white-knuckle our way through but to live by the Spirit via practices that enable us to draw on the power of God to live in freedom.<sup>7</sup>

### **Identify the Catalysts**

- Who or What Drives the Process
- Holy Discontent
- Growing Dissonance (what they say they believe in but it doesn’t match actions)
- Person(s) with Influence
- Internal – pastor or talented leader
- External – Study groups, etc.
- Care for the catalysts

### **Gather the Leaders**

- Discernment
- Pay attention to your own response to the catalyst.

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<sup>7</sup> Comer, J. M. (2021). [\*Live no lies: recognize and resist the three enemies that sabotage your peace\*](#). Form.



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- Study scripture
- Biblical Literacy
- Bring in Experts
- Pray
- Task Force

### **Declare a Decision**

- Write a paper
- Sermon series
- By Law change(s)
- Membership meeting
- Kindness
- Clarity is key (what exactly is changing, growing, moving)

### **Engage Congregation/Group**

- Pastor through the process
- Be intentional
- Give many opportunities to discuss and process
- Provide your resource list
- Meet one on one with leaders in the group
- Sermon series
- Seminars
- Pastoral Care

### **#5). Implement the Change**

#### **III. We Are Living In His World**

- 1 John 5: 19

“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

- 2 Corinthians 11: 14

“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”

- John 12:31 (Jesus speaking with the Greeks)

“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”

- 2 Corinthians 4:4

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

- e.g. ADAM&EVE

Genesis 1 overview

#### Gen. 1:26

“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over...all the earth

27

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male & female he created them.



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God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Vs. 31a And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

Genesis 2 details

Gen 2:15

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** it and **take care** of it.

- ❖ Work: abad (aw-bad’) to work, implied to serve, enslave, bond servant, compel, husbandman, keep, labor, bring to pass, servant, service, be wrought, worshipper.
- ❖ Take care: shamar (shaw-mar’) to hedge about as with thorns, beware, be circumspect, **guard**, **protect**, attend to, take heed, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, save, sure wait, watch.

Vs 16

“And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Proverbs 18:1

A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He **rages against** all wise judgment.

Proverbs 19:3

One’s own folly leads **to ruin**, yet the heart rages against the Lord.

**We need to realize:**

- We have an enemy
- He hates us
- We are living in his world

**CTK: The Kingdom Triad...The Enemy’s Kingdom**

Mention the Kingdom Chart

### I. We Have An Enemy

You mean he’s real?

Not just the opposite balance of good in us, but a literal real entity?

Remind you: Spiritual being having a physical experience

My litmus test: Child abuse (prey on our children)



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Having a hard time believing this, hang with me

SATAN: (*sah-tahn*);

• An opponent, or the Opponent  
the hater; the accuser; adversary, enemy; one who resists, obstructs, and hinders whatever is good.

• Wanted to be God, was thrown down from heaven with a third of the angels. Which are now called demons, demonic spirits.

(Revelation 12:7-9 “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”) ( Also in Isaiah 14:12-15)

- Hell was created for them.

(Matthew 25:41...Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”)

• *Satan* comes from the verb which means “to be an opponent,” or “to withstand.”  
As a noun, *satan* can describe any “opponent” (2 Sam. 19:21-22).  
However, when the form *ha-satan* (the Adversary) occurs, the translation is usually “Satan,”  
**not his name, but his accurate description: hateful enemy**

- Since Satan is the Hater, he is all the more opposed to God, who is love.

(1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

1 John 3:10 & 14c

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of god; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. 14c “Anyone who does not love remains in death.”)

- Mankind did not witness Satan’s beginning, but by God’s design shall see his end, one of ceaseless torment and humiliation

(Isaiah. 14:16a “Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate:”

Ezek. 28:12c-19

“You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz, and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper; sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching all the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.”

Rev. 20:10



## Summer of Lies – How Lies are Told to Us Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves

“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”).

- Unbelief is a product of belong to the enemy

*John 8:42-45*

*“Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but He sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”*”

### II. He Hates Us

John 10:10a

“The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy...”

1 Peter 5:8

“Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Luke 22:31

“And the lord said, “Simon! Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.”

- e.g. ADAM&EVE

Genesis 1 overview

Gen. 1:26

“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over...all the earth

27

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male & female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Vs. 31a And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

Genesis 2 details

Gen 2:15

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** it and **take care** of it.

- ❖ Work: abad (aw-bad’) to work, implied to serve, enslave, bond servant, compel, husbandman, keep, labor, bring to pass, servant, service, be wrought, worshipper.
- ❖ Take care: shamar (shaw-mar’) to hedge about as with thorns, beware, be circumspect, **guard**, **protect**, attend to, take heed, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, save, sure wait, watch.

Vs 16

“And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”



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Created Eve, as it was not good for man to be alone

Gen 3:1-6

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden but God did say, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.”

Vs. 4

You will not surely die” the serpent said to the woman. (5) For God knows that when u eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Vs 6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

ASK: Why was the enemy in the garden to begin with?  
 Had Adam forsaken his duties?  
 Is Eve daft?  
 How could she fall for such an illusion? \_\_\_\_\_?

The Enemy’s methods:

- The encounter with the enemy

Step #1: Dons a disguise (angel of light) that the woman would find acceptable

Step #2: Outwits the inexperienced woman through confusion & distortion.

Did He really say?

Do you think that is what He really meant?

QUESTIONING God’s motives.

Step #3: Satan redefines God to Eve.

He cast doubt on God’s plan/order/instructions.

QUESTIONING God’s character.

(A process he personally knows, he is seeking to distort her image of God.

“He would not want you to do without.” )

Step #4: He reconstructed God’s directives.

(“You will not surely die! You will become....

Step #5: He elevated the role of humanity to be like God.

(Which was his sin = self aggrandizement)

(“You will become LIKE HIM!”)

Appeals to our flesh, our human nature

1 John 2:16 (Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life)

(“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”)

! Tried same method w/Jesus: (see Matt. 4, Mark 1, and Luke 4).

Temptation of Christ

**III. We Are Living In His World**

- 1 John 5: 19

“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

- 2 Corinthians 11: 14



## Summer of Lies – How Lies are Told to Us Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves

“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”

- John 12:31 (Jesus speaking with the Greeks)

“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”

- 2 Corinthians 4:4

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

### Where are you today with this information?

#### INVITATION:

- Wondering if this is true: Spiritual being having a physical experience  
*Salvation area of altar*

- Maybe you are like Jessica. Ended up walking this yellow brick road because you were exploited.

It was imposed upon you.

Today is the end of your wondering.

Today is the end of your erroneous acceptance that it is your fault. Today is the end of that guilt & shame.

Today is the end of the protective wall built up because you felt so shafted....

Today is the day to JUMP off this road

### 1 John 4:4 He that is in you is GREATER than he that is in the world

Use in closing

Ephesians 2:1-5

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Hebrews 4:15

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was w/o sin. So let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

### “2 Chronicles 16:9

**“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”**

2 Timothy 2:24-26

“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their sense and escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will.”

(Job 1:7 enemy tells God he has come from ‘roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.’)

Vs 11: But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has and he will curse you and die

Appeal to the flesh—“the tree was good for food”—



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Appeal to the eyes -- "It was pleasant to the eyes"— psychological part of man, to his mind.

Appeal to pride -- "And a tree to be desired to make one wise"—this is an appeal to the religious side of man.

Difference is what they produce because you take on the form of whom you worship.

### Discipleship Shared: Whatever God Does In You He Wants To Do Through You

Living Usable

**90 Days of Discipleship: Lose Your Life to Find It**

**Matthew 16:24-27**

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done"*

**The Wednesday Nights of Winter, 6:30PM, F.L.C. auditorium**

**John 13...Washing disciples feet (1-20) • Foretells of the betrayal (21-30)**

**New Commandment to love one another (31-35)**

*31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

**John 13:36** (Jesus foretells Peter's Denial)

*36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times."*

- *"Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."*

Three years prior, Peter answered the initial call:

**Matthew 4:18-20**

*18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

#### WORD WEALTH

**13:36 follow**, *akoloutheo* (ak-ol-oo-theh-oh); Strong's #190: To accompany, go along with, go the same way with, follow one who precedes. A is in union with, and *keluethos* is a road. *Akoloutheo* is being on the same roadway with someone. Since the word was used for soldiers, servants, and pupils, it can easily be transferred to the life of the Christian. In 78 Gospel occurrences it is used 77 times of following Christ. Metaphorically, it is used for discipleship (Matt. 9:9; Mark 9:38).<sup>8</sup>

**Jesus and Peter John 21**

*15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."*

The initial invitation to salvation in Christ marks us as His disciple.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

*13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

As we walk in this relationship with Him, something else happens: We are invited to come to the end of ourselves and allow Him to work through us what He has done in us. Jesus repeats this foretelling...for the rest of His Disciples:

**John 14:12** *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."*

<sup>8</sup> Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Jn 13:34). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



## Summer of Lies – How Lies are Told to Us Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves

**Mark 3:13-15** (this is the same power entrusted to us in John 14)

*13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons.*

**KENOSIS** [keh NOE sis]—a theological term used in connection with the dual nature of Jesus as fully human and fully divine. The word comes from a Greek verb which means “to empty” (Phil. 2:7). The NASB translates this passage, “He emptied Himself,” but the KJV and NKJV express it, “He made Himself of no reputation.” The Bible teaches that our Savior was both fully divine and completely human during His earthly life. But nowhere does Scripture explain exactly how Jesus’ two natures co-existed. Theologians have struggled for years to explain this mystery. “The Kenosis” describes the fact that, according to Philippians 2:7, when God’s divine Son became human He voluntarily laid aside His divine rights to function as God. Jesus did not stop being God, but He chose not to exercise His powers as God, choosing instead to become fully dependent upon the Holy Spirit for His power to live and minister. It is this great truth which underscores the fact that Jesus not only lived a sinless life on human terms (yet retaining His nature as God), but He provided a model for His call to us to minister in His name (as mere humans). It is an effective model not because He was “merely human,” but because He chose to minister in the Spirit’s might, voluntarily confining Himself to those resources. Thus, in commissioning His own to prayer and ministry, Jesus says of His follower, “The works that I do he will do also; and greater than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

Jesus has lived out the pathway for redeemed humans to live in the resources of the Holy Spirit and minister in His Name with supernatural expectations—not in their strength or wisdom, but His—a wisdom and grace He demonstrated in His ministry<sup>9</sup>

**NOTE: RECONFIGURE. INSTEAD OF DOING THE FIVE AREAS OF INFLUENCE THREE DIFFERENT TIMES, DESCRIBE THEM WITH ALL THEIR DETAILS ONE AT A TIME. SEEMED TO JUMP AROUND TOO MUCH**

### **Discipleship Shared: Whatever God Does In You He Wants To Do Through You Submission: 3 Kingdoms – MY Kingdom**

RF: Meditation • Prayer • Fasting • Study • Simplicity • Solitude • Submission • Service • Confession • Worship • Guidance • Celebration

PJH: Committing to Hear God’s Voice • Water Baptism • Communion • Forgiveness (walking in the Spirit of) • Feeding on the Word of God • Maintaining Integrity of Heart • Abiding in the Spirit • Living in Submission • Practicing Solitude • Living as a Worshipper

RECAP: PRACTICING LIVING IN GOD’S KINGDOM

TESTIMONIES: Reading one verse a day and DOING IT

### Submission: 3 Kingdoms – MY Kingdom

#### **God’s Kingdom:**

- The kingdom of God is not just heaven, a place.
- Or the church, his people.
- They are meaningless w/o & a more accurate definition is: The kingdom of God is **HIS AUTHORITY.**

#### **How do we live in His Kingdom/THIS AUTHORITY?**

- We praxis scripture: Application of a skill. Eternal Habits.

#### **MY KINGDOM:**

**THE GIFT:** Large gift, wrapped nicely. Have someone open.

You’ve been given a kingdom at creation...Your Kingdom.

A gift of love that came wrapped up in a box of free will.

#### **I. Just WHAT Have We Been Given?**

<sup>9</sup> Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Hayford’s Bible handbook*. Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



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**Week 15 Lied To By: Ourselves**

**FreeWill**

**Gen. 2:8-17**

<sup>8</sup> Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin<sup>[a]</sup> and onyx are also there.) <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

**II. So HOW do we live in this world?**

CHOICE: Free Will      To Chose      Who to listen to

- Because who we listen to is who we trust
- Who we trust is who we really love

**John 14:15** “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

We are ETERNAL Spiritual Beings having this PRESENT physical experience  
 Given control of our own kingdom  
 We get to choose who we listen to...

- God will not do what He expects us to do:

Our responsibility **Romans 12:1-2**

“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to rest and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

**A. FIVE Sources of Influence**

1. God/Christ **Colossians 1:15-20**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by[a] him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

2. The Enemy      USE? Genesis 3:1-13

(**Revelation 12:7-9** Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, **8** but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. **9** And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

( Also in **Isaiah 14:12-15**)



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➤ **1 John 5: 19**

*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

➤ **2 Corinthians 11: 14-15**

*And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

*So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

➤ **John 12:31** (Jesus speaking with the Greeks)

*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out*

➤ **2 Corinthians 4:4**

*In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

3. Evil People

**Proverbs 21:10**

*The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.*

4. Life

**Matthew 5:45b**

*For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

5. Own Choices

**Joshua 24:15**

*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

**James 1:22**

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

**“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”**

These are the influences

**ASK:** So HOW do they influence us???

- ❖ By singing to us...Singing to us to follow them...to give way to them
- ❖ To YIELD to them...They want your Kingdom

**B. Power of Yield**

**Yield = Give right-of-way.**

**ASK:** Who holds this? (You do, given at creation.)

**YEILD:**

1. To God

**Ephesians 4:22-24**

*to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**Hebrews 11:25** (Moses)

*choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.*

**Yield statement:**

- I will not obsess about my old life: feeling lesser than/better than or in old desires to engage in things that hurt Christ.
- I will do things that Christ did.
- I will repent when I have sinned.
- I will invest in my relationship w/Christ so I can fall more in love.



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- I will make the choice on how to act by the illuminating light of scripture. (removing emotions from decision making.)

2. To the Enemy

**2 Corinthians 11:14**

*And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

Yield statement:

- This is not wrong.
- It's really not that bad.
- No one will know.
- I'm only going to try it.
- Why R U getting your undies in a wad, it's not that big of a deal.

3. To Evil People

a. Ones you know

**Galatians 5:19-21**

*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Yield statement:

- Two reactions: They affect you w/o your choice. (e.g. drunk driver)
- Or you lie to yourself: They are not THAT bad.

b. Ones you are tricked/abused by

**2 Corinthians 11:13, 15**

***13** For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. **15** So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

Yield statement:

- Don't be so judgmental. They would not state it on TV or put it in print if it was not real!
- Nothing. You were exploited. Abused. (FEAR)

4. To Life

**Matthew 5:45b**

***44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Life happens)*

Yield statement:

- "Why me, Lord? I'm a Christian."

We are not exempt from life because we love Christ.

You do not get a special 'go directly to heavenly life' pass when you fall in love with Him.

One that we can wave above others heads.

We LIVE in the enemies territory. Don't act like you don't. (It's embarrassing...can you deal w/sovereignty?

Which means: Do You TRUST HIM?

5. To Own Choices -Carnal man



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**Galatians 5: 13**

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

Yield statement:

- “Just this once.”
- “It is no big deal.”

**We hold the power of Yield so what are we suppose to do with it? PURSUE GODLY PRINCIPLES**

- ✓ Do you know Your Heavenly Father is constantly looking throughout the earth to see whose committed heart needs strengthening?

**2 Chronicles 16:9a**

*For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.*

*The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. What a fool you have been! NLT*

**C. The Power of Pursued Principles**

**You take on the form of whom you worship.**

1. GOD

**1 Timothy 4:7-8**

*Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly.*

**8** *“Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”*

2. THE ENEMY

**James 4:7**

*“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

*So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

*Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **7** Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. **8** Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

REMINDER: **1 John 4:4** He that is in you is GREATER than he that is in the world

3. EVIL PEOPLE

Oprah-type:

**John 7:24**

*“Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”*

**1 Corinthians 15:33**

*Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”*

Abusive –type:



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Ruins good character

4. LIFE

He holds us in the palm of his hand, REALLY?

**Isaiah 41:13**

*For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."*

**This is where you will answer: "Do I believe God is sovereign?"**

Do I trust Him?

Or do I seek explanations of why this is happening?

Do I look for whose fault it is?

Do you not think someone who loves you so intimately will let you know, in that intimacy, if you have offended Him (sin)? Benefit of daily conversations w/Him.

(Haughty **Prov. 21:4** "*Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin!*")

5. OWN CHOICES (SELF)

Repentance

**John 9:31**

*We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.*

**Galatians 5:16**

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

**Hebrews 5:14**

*But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

Solid food eaten develops Fruit of the Spirit. (Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self control... grows as we yield into Him.)

Solid Food = Scripture

Eaten = learn it, believe it, understand it, believe it, DO it

PRODUCES FRUIT

Constant use:

- 1.) Do something you do not want to do & do it regularly: Devotions, Exercise
- 2.) Deprive yourself of something pleasant: Ice Cream, Shopping
- 3.) Demand definite quotas/performance of yourself: What end result am I looking for? Goal Setting
- 4.) Do something difficult: Take a class, Teach, Make new friends, Tithe
- 5.) Do not put things off: START



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**Galatians 6:15** “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation/changed life.”

**KEY to Yield: Have TRAINED themselves to distinguish good from evil.**

**Hebrews 5:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

**We hold the power of yield in one hand, the power of pursued principles in the other:  
what are we going to do with them???**

## Obedience

*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

"His servants ye are to whom ye obey."

[Romans 6:16](#)

The first thing to do in examining the power that dominates me is to take hold of the unwelcome fact that I am responsible for being thus dominated. If I am a slave to myself, I am to blame because at a point I yielded to myself. Likewise, if I obey God I do so because I have yielded myself to Him. **Yielding to Jesus will break every form of slavery in any human life.**

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Yield in childhood to selfishness, and you will find it the most enchainning tyranny on earth. There is no power in the human soul of itself to break the bondage of a disposition formed by yielding. Yield for one second to anything in the nature of lust (remember what lust is: "I must have it at once," whether it be the lust of the flesh or the lust of the mind) - once yield and though you may hate yourself for having yielded, you are a bonds slave to that thing. There is no release in human power at all but only in the Redemption. You must yield yourself in utter humiliation to the only One Who can break the dominating power viz., the Lord Jesus Christ - "He hath anointed me...to preach deliverance to all captives."

You find this out in the most ridiculously small ways - "Oh, I can give that habit up when I like." You cannot, you will find that the habit absolutely dominates you because you yielded to it willingly. It is easy to sing - "He will break every fetter" and at the same time believing a life of obvious slavery to yourself. **Yielding to Jesus will break every form of slavery in any human life.**



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**2:13 Submission** is the theme of this section (1 Pet. 2:13–3:7). The natural response is to demand rights and refuse to yield to another person; it is a supernatural response to give up rights and yield. True submission involves refusing to seek self-interest and instead assuming voluntary commitment of service to others (Phil. 2:3, 4). This volitional submission is seen in several spheres of relationships: citizens to government (1 Pet. 2:13–17); slaves to masters (vv. 18–25); and wives to husbands (1 Pet. 3:1–7).<sup>10</sup>

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**Luke 6:27-31**

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes our cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you and if anyone takes what belongs to you do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

What is the power: vs. 35b

“Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.”

**Philippians 4:8-9**

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice.

What is the power:

And the God of peace will be with you.”

**2 Peter 1:3-11**

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers,

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (1 Pe 2:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



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be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2 Timothy 3:1-5  
 Having a form of godliness...

Colossians 3:1-14

Luke 22:29

“I confer on you a kingdom..”

Sin is “Darkness is the assertion of independence rather than God-dependence.”

G.E. Ladd

Parable interpretation: Does this apply for this age or the age to come? What does this require of me today.

**KINGDOM EXTRA**

Colossians 2:13–15 tells us that Jesus Christ’s triumph over sin and evil powers was accomplished in “it”—that is, in *the Cross*. This text, joined to and studied beside others (Eph. 2:13–16; Gal. 3:13, 14; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Rom. 5:6–15; and Rev. 12:10, 11), firmly establishes Jesus’ suffering, shed blood, sacrificial death, and resurrection triumph as the only adequate and available ground for ransom from sin, reconciliation to God, redemption from slavery, and restoration. The Cross is the sole hope and means for full reinstatement to relationship with God and rulership under Him—to “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17). To avoid presumption or imbalance regarding the message and ministry of the present power of the kingdom of God, we must focus on and regularly review two points; the source and the grounds for the delegation of such authority and power. 1) God’s sovereign authority and almighty power is the source from which mankind derives any ability to share in the exercise of God’s kingdom power. 2) But even more important, seeing sinful, fallen man had lost all claim to his early privilege of rulership under God, let us remember the *grounds* upon which all kingdom privilege or power may be restored and by which such spiritual ministry with authority may be exercised.

11

Week 4: Principles for Kingdom Living (Kingdom Values, The Kingdom of Me)

- Matthew 18:1-9 Humility
- Matthew 18: 21-35 Unforgiving Servant (Forgiveness)
- Matthew 20:1-16 Generous Landowner (Reward is up to God. Whether you’ve known Him 15 yrs or 1.)
- Matthew 21:33-46 Possessing God’s stuff w/o treating it as His. Self centered belief.
- Matthew 22: 1-14 Marriage Feast (No favorites. Invitation to Heaven given to all.)
- Matthew 25: 1-13 Ten Virgins (Anticipate, Prepare, Watch)
- Matthew 25:14-30 The Talents
- Matthew 25: 31-46 How you treat His children is How you treat Him.
- Luke 19:11-27 You are held accountable to invest, use, care for the talents He gives you/sends you

Extra:

<sup>11</sup>Hayford, J. W. 1997, c1996. *Praying in the Spirit : Heavenly resources for praise and intercession*. C1996 by Jack W. Hayford. Spirit-Filled Life Kingdom Dynamics Study Guides. Thomas Nelson: Nashville



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Kingdom Sayings

Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28

Matthew 11:12, Luke 16:16

Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20

Matthew 16:19

Matthew 18: 1-4; Mark 9:36,37; 10:15; Luke 9:47,48; 18:17

Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17

Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:28; Luke 9:27

(Matthew 13:10-17)

Insight(Matthew 13:11)

Prepare us for truth of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:12-13)

Bless those who heard them (Matt 13:16)

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**Signs of Greatness: Being Led By The Spirit**

*“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust (desires) of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16*

***BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT...to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. Romans 8:5-14***

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***The Holy Spirit leads by:***

1. Prompting, an inner witness: Titus 2:11-13

2.) Knowing the HEART of God & ‘Building’ in us the mind of Christ: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

3.) Always in harmony with scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21

(NOTE: The similarity of the job description of Scripture & of the Holy Spirit.)

4.) Teach and Remind: John 14:26

5.) Point out truth (Give direction in our lives): John 16:13a; Luke 4:1; Acts 10:19-20, 16:6-7



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- 6.) Prophetic (Forth-telling of scripture): John 16:13b-14
  - 7.) Feels guilty when we sin, concerned with Christ’s standard of righteousness & God’s judgment: John 16:8-13
  - 8.) Opposed to sinful desires: Galatians 5:17-18; 1 Peter 2:11
  - 9.) Exhort believers: On sin, backsliding, perseverance, sonship: Romans 8:13-16
  - 10.) Holy Spirit voice becomes ‘weaker’ the longer the believer resists His promptings: Romans 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19
  - 11.) Results in spiritual death when rejected & Results in spiritual life when obeyed: Romans 8:6-13
- 
- GOSPEL OF JOHN: Belief VS. Unbelief (compiled by Pr. Orleen Haseltine)

**SESSION III**

**There Is No Place Like Home: Understanding His Kingdom**

- Things like:

Persistent prayer is valued by God.

Joy grows in the presence of JC.

Forgiveness brings freedom. (Jas 2:12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,)

You are given talents and expected to use them.

How you treat His children is how you treat Him.

Humility is highly valued.

We respond to His kingdom as individuals and held accountable as individuals.

His kingdom demands we value it the most, we must abandoned all other values in the face of this.

- Due to the resurrection, we can experience eternal praxis, eternal established practices here on earth.

**I. WHAT is the Kingdom of God?**

Use: Colossians 1:13

“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

**THE DEFINITION**

ASK: What is the KoG?

His church

His people

ASK: When will it come?

ASK: How will it come?

- Scriptures:

O.T.:

Isaiah 2:4

“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”



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Isaiah 11:6-11

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s next. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people.....”

N.T.:

After the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus moved to Galilee (Capernum).

Matthew 4:17

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

5:20

“For I tell you unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

7:21

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

13:11

“He replied, ‘The knowledge of the secret of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’ (This is why he speaks in parables.)

6:10

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Luke 22:24-30

“A dispute rose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Matthew 25:31,34

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separate the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then, the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and came to visit me.”

Present:

Romans 14:17

“For the kingdom of god is not a matter of eating or drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,”

Future:



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Matthew 25:34

“Then, the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”

Realm:

Present: (Which we are now in, as Christians)

Colossians 1:13

“delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

Luke 17:20,21

“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

Future:

2 Peter 1:11

“will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 8:11

“Many will come from the east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 12:41,43

“will gather out of his kingdom all cases of sin and all evil doers...then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

SO...What is the KoG?

Western ideology = A realm over which a king exercises his authority.

“A state or monarchy the head which is a king; dominion; realm”

OR

The people belonging to that realm.

Webster:

**king-dom** [kɪŋdəm]

*n*

1. **monarch’s territory:** a state or people ruled over by a king or queen
2. **sphere of activity:** a realm or area of activity in which a particular thing is thought to dominate
  - *the kingdom of professional tennis*
3. SCIENCE **highest classification for natural things:** any of the three groups, animal, vegetable, and mineral, into which natural organisms and objects are traditionally, as opposed to scientifically, divided

Kingdom may be:

A realm over which a sovereign exercises his authority

A people who belong to that realm

This subject can become so confusing because we do not embrace the complete definition:

The rank, quality, state, or attributes of a king; royal authority, dominion; monarchy; kingship.



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Hebrew: Malkuth  
Greek: Basileia

Both = the rank, authority, and sovereignty exercised by a king.

Secondary meanings

Primary = the authority to rule, the sovereignty of the king

Reign

Psalm 103:19

The Lord establishes his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”

Psalm 145:11

“They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.”

Psalm 145:13

“Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endure through all generations.”

Daniel 2:37

“You, oh king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory;”

\*Luke 19:11-27 (Parable of the ten minas (reap what you did not sow, ten minas)

“While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’ But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’ He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it. ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’ Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow. His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’ Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas. ‘Sir’, they said, ‘he already has ten!’ He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me.’”

Believe, seek, act prepares the groundwork for growth of more belief which leads to more seeking which leads to more action.

(right before the triumphal entry)

What was the noble man seeking?

A realm?

Servants? People to rule?

Authority.

Mark 10:15

“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”



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What are we receiving?

Matthew 6:33

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be to you as well.”  
(what shall we eat, drink, wear)

What are we seeking?

The kingdom of God is not just heaven, a place.  
Or the church, his people.  
They are meaningless w/o AUTHORITY

Which has been handed down to us via JC  
(find scriptures where)  
?matt. 10:5-8

Matt. 28:18

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” JC

Some passages refer to the KoG as a realm, place  
Some as a present reality  
Some as a future reality

And it is all three

**II.** What are we to do with it?  
(second h.o.)

Spend your life time learning, living, exercising in it.

LIVE scripture

Wrap up three sessions:

Closing prayer:

John 17:15-

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.  
They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth.  
As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

Some promises are require future praxis.  
Some promises are immediate, present praxis.

**Live** scripture

When it tells us to forgive, we struggle and forgive



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Tithe  
Pray  
Pray for healing & then trust  
Wait on God

Sometime it takes the supernatural to do this

John 14:23

“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

Vs 25

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Remind you of the book ends:  
Love....Self Control.

Greater things than these John 14:12

1 Jn 5:12 “He who has the son has life, who has not the son has not life.”

**So let's ACT like it!**

Ephesians 3:10-11

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matt 18:18

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, loose...

John 20:21

Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’

Luke 9:1-6 & 10:1-20

Commissioning of the 12 & 70

Luke 22:24-30

“A dispute rose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

Heirs Ephesians 2:19-22



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“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. and in him you, too, are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

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While Jesus began teaching His disciples about the authority He was giving them, the victory was not fully realized until the Cross. Look up these verses on our authority in Christ: Luke 10:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:20–22; 2:6. Where are we seated? Colossians 2:10, 13–15

Jesus gave us dominion over the demonic realm

To those who feel that we should not use the personal pronoun “I” but instead ask the Lord to silence evil spirits, my answer is simple and biblical: Nowhere in Scripture is that procedure taught nor practiced. It sounds very pious but it is erroneous.

Jesus gives us authority over the demonic realm. We do not need to ask for what is already given. That such authority is given to all God’s servants is clear in that it was not only given to the twelve apostles (Luke 9:4) but also to the seventy other disciples (Luke 10:1f). Since they were disciples of Jesus but not part of the apostolic band, they can be seen as representatives of Christians in general.<sup>10</sup>

When the seventy returned from their witnessing ministry, they were not bashful in referring to *their* authority over demons as it was evidenced in their ministry. They exclaimed, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17).

Jesus, far from rebuking them for “arrogance,” affirmed their words. After declaring the fall of Satan that He beheld in the spirit realm, which was evidently directly connected to their ministry (v. 18), He joyfully declared, “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents [interesting in light of Genesis 3!] and scorpions [Rev. 9:1–11], and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (v. 19). Their authority, *exousia*, delegated to them by Jesus Himself, was greater than the power, *dunamis*, of the enemy. They had nothing to fear (v. 19).

The only caution Jesus laid upon them was to maintain balance in their life, ministry, and priorities. While it was a cause of rejoicing to know that the enemy was subject to them (vv. 17–18), it was more important to rejoice in their relationship to God and His kingdom (v. 20).

In the only case outside of the Gospels where the Scriptures describe a one-on-one deliverance “session” from demonization (Acts 16), the apostle Paul followed the exact pattern of deliverance ministry practiced by the seventy. To the demons afflicting the slave girl of Philippi he declared, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” Luke writes, “And he came out that very hour.”

<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Murphy, E. F. 1997, c1996. *Handbook for spiritual warfare* (Page 36). Thomas Nelson: Nashville



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III. The Specifics of Submission (see **1 Pet. 5**)

**1 Peter 5:6-11**

***6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. **8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. **11** To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

There are **seven basic areas of life** that require submissiveness on the part of mankind. Each merits a whole range of development and bears far more Scripture support than the brief list of references given here. But this simple outline serves as a framework for further study. New Testament life, in which the fullness of God's love for man has been revealed, summons submission at these levels of relationship:

**A. Submission to God the Father**

**Heb. 12:5-9** **5** *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?*

*“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.*

**6** *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”*



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*7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?*

**Jas. 4:6,7**

*6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

#### B. Submission to the Truth

**Rom. 10:1-4** on receiving God's provision of righteousness through Christ alone, without works  
*Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

#### C. Submission to the Body of Christ. This refers to:

##### 1. Jesus as the Head

**Eph. 1:20-23** *20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

**Col. 2:18-19** *18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,[a] puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

##### 2. Local eldership and church government

**1 Cor. 16:14-16**

*14 Let all that you do be done in love.*

*15 Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— 16 be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.*

**Heb. 13:17**

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

##### 3. Individuals of the membership

**Eph. 5:21** *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

**1 Pet. 5:5** *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

#### D. Submission to parents

**Luke 2:51** *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.*

**Col. 3:20** *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

**Eph. 6:1-3** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”*

#### E. Submission to civil authority

**Rom. 13:1-7**

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes*



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*to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

**1 Pet. 2:13-23** **13** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants[c] of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. **18** Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **19** For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

### F. Submission to employers

**Eph. 6:5-7** **5** Bondservants,[a] obey your earthly masters[b] with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, **6** not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, **7** rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,

**Col. 3:22** Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

### G. Submission to roles as husband and wife

**Eph. 5:22-33** **22** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. **25** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **26** that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, **30** because we are members of his body. **31** "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." **32** This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. **33** However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

**Col. 3:18,19**

*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*

### CLOSING:

#### Philippians 2:5-11

**5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,[a] **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,[b] being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"His example calls you and me to discover the power release and growth that will only happen in and through us if we properly learn the spirit of submission. The path down (submitting) is the way up (receiving authority). Even then, all authority in the spiritual realm is only to be exercised in the Spirit and with the attitude of a servant:"



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### IV. The Spirit of Submission (see Ps. 37)

Any truth can be stretched over the rack of cold, literalistic application and made into a dried hide of demanding duty. However, New Testament life is not designed to wrap man in newly developed legal demands but rather to fill man with new possibilities for living in the love of God by the outflow of the Holy Spirit (see **Rom. 5:5** *and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*) The enunciating of the basic-to-life principle of submission can be responded to in fear, in doubt, in presumption, in love, in trust or in understanding. **To select the wise response and avoid the foolish requires a wholehearted openness toward the Holy Spirit.** Only He can lead us into the living of any truth. We need to be mindful that:

**A. The Spirit of submission is not cowardly** (see **2 Tim. 1:7** *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control*). He will not produce passive, insensitive saints who flop before anything in supposed submission.

We are not to submit to:

1. Satan (**1 Pet. 5:8-9** *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*).

2. Flesh (**1 Cor. 9:24-27** *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control,[a] lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified..* We are to make no provision for it.

3. Legalism (**Gal. 2:4-5 4** *Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— 5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you..* It is always in opposition to the gospel.

**B. The Spirit of submission is not confused** (see **Acts 4:15-21** *15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened.*

**5:26-42** *Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." 33 When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. 34 But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, 40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.*

This deals with the question "How does one submit to conflicting authorities?" The apostles satisfied both God and rulers, submitting unto both. They did not submit to demands of silence, but they did submit to scourging with joy.



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**C. The Spirit of submission is not contentious** (1 Cor. 11:16 *If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.*)

**D. The Spirit of submission is not comparatively competitive.** 2 Corinthians 1:12 *For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.*

warns against the ugliest aspects of a spirit of competition, while Proverbs 27:17 *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.* recommends the best aspects of "sharpening" one another by interactive activity.

PRACTICAL DISCIPLESHIP  
 from the book "Celebration of Discipline" by Richard Foster

Submission! What is His goal in asking us to be submissive?  
 (His Goal is Freedom: To lay down the terrible burden of always having to get our own way. The freedom to give into each other. Only in submission can we distinguish between genuine issues and stubborn self-will.

WE are Free to not respond. (Say nothing)  
 We are Free to value other people.

Mark 8:34

<sup>34</sup> When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, <sup>b</sup>"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself (don't give in to your self ambitions), and take up his cross, and follow Me.

? What is your definition of Submission

? Self Denial

Who gives us direction on this path?

Does this mean loss of our identity?

John 21:19 Jesus instructed Peter to 'Follow Me'...did he lose his identity?

Acts 9:16 Did Paul lose his identity exercising submission?

Matthew 10:39

<sup>39</sup> If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it.

<sup>9</sup> <sup>2</sup>He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

No! We find it!

Matthew 23:8

<sup>8</sup> Don't ever let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are on the same level as brothers and sisters.\* <sup>9</sup> And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. <sup>10</sup> And don't let anyone call you 'Master,' for there is only one master, the Messiah. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you must be a servant. <sup>12</sup> But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Living against the grain of the world.



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John 13:15

<sup>15</sup> I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

**3:18 To submit** (Gk. *hupotasso*, lit. “to line up under”) suggests a voluntary relinquishment of one’s rights to another. Paul always used this term to describe the role assignment of a wife to her husband (1 Cor. 14:34; Eph. 5:21, 22; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1). The concept suggests mutual submission and intimacy, thereby promoting a union ordained by God with love as the binding agent. Love characterizes the servant leadership of the husband, and love awakens the submissive cooperation of the wife (see chart, Role Relationships Between Men and Women). Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can a woman truly relinquish her desires and line up under her husband’s leadership (see 1 Pet. 3, Submission; chart, Submission).

### Authority

#### A Challenge to Authority

**Sooner or later, almost all leaders have their authority questioned. Sometimes they are challenged directly, but more often indirectly by rumor and innuendo.**

Jesus faced a direct challenge to His authority from the chief priests and elders, the top leadership in Israel (Matt. 21:23–27). In this instance He didn’t argue with them, but simply tossed the ball back into their court. He showed that one very effective way of responding to threatening questions is to ask questions in return.

But observe two aspects of the interaction between Jesus and the Jewish leaders:

1. *The motives of the challengers.* The scribes and Pharisees had no interest in an honest understanding of the nature or source of Jesus’ authority. They were only concerned with protecting their own interests and power. In light of their behavior, you might ask yourself whether you ever question or resist people in authority over you because you are afraid or jealous of them.
2. *The security of Jesus.* Jesus was neither upset nor caught off guard by His attackers. For one thing, He had endured their criticism before, and no doubt expected it to increase. But He also knew with absolute certainty about the very thing that His challengers were attacking: He knew who He was and whose authority He wielded (28:18). His response is a reminder that intimidation is something we allow to occur. People may threaten and confront us, but only we allow ourselves to feel fear. **The real question is, Are we certain who we are as followers of the King?**

#### A Symbol of Authority—and Responsibility

Those in authority should hold that authority as a trust on behalf of others. That’s what the stones on Aaron’s breastplate symbolized (Ex. 39:14). The gems were a reminder that the priests were representatives of the tribes of Israel. Whatever Aaron and his descendants did, whatever choices they made, whenever they wore the breastplate they were to keep the people in mind.

In a similar way, if you hold authority, you should weigh carefully and frequently your responsibility to those who depend on you. Authority is as much a privilege as a right. You may enjoy its “perks,” but you also need to fulfill the obligations and honor the trust that others have placed in you.

#### Empower, Not Overpower

One of the most important things authority figures can do is to make it possible for those under them to act responsibly, wisely, and independently. Moses did that by giving the Hebrews God’s laws (Deut. 4:5). As a result, the Hebrews had the potential to become a great nation of “wise and understanding people” (4:6).

This is a useful lesson for anyone in authority today. If we view authority as merely telling others what to do, then we’ll slowly train subordinates to become passively dependent, waiting for their next orders. But if instead we view authority as an obligation and opportunity to invest in others and help them develop their expertise, then we can empower them to exercise their own judgment and skills.

#### Lessons on Authority

Sooner or later every authority figure will probably face a challenge of authority. Moses faced one from two major Israelite leaders, who happened to be his sister and brother. How he handled the situation, including his plea for God to deliver his sister, Miriam, from leprosy (Num. 12:13), proves instructive. There are several lessons to be gained about the nature of godly authority and the challenges people in authority face:

1. *Subordinates often find authority difficult to accept.* Even outwardly submissive people and close



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associates may harbor jealousy and suspicions about an authority figure. These issues may be unspoken, but nonetheless they can create a low-level current of dissatisfaction.

2. *Rebellion against authority is not necessarily related to any particular failure on the part of an authority figure.* Resistance to authority is not always a well-considered response to a lapse of leadership.

Sometimes it can break out almost spontaneously as a result of imagined grievances.

3. *Rejection of authority can be infectious and contagious.* It's interesting that the challenge by Miriam and Aaron immediately preceded the people's refusal to enter Canaan (Num. 13–14) and Korah's rebellion (Num. 16). Rebellion can spread through gossip, half-truths, and emotional appeals. Because of the sin nature, people have a tendency to join with others in rejecting authority. In fact, rebels often become folk heroes.

4. *Authority needs to be tempered by humility.* The text points out that Moses was a leader with humility (12:3). That's a good model to follow. Especially when faced with "rebellion," authority figures need to respond with prayer, humility, and dependence on God's wisdom and strength, whatever else they may do. The primary goal is not simply to reassert one's power or overcome opponents—though those may be necessary—but to act in a way that honors God's purposes and name.

5. *Christians are always called to mercy, even as they administer authority and justice.* When Christ was attacked by angry people, He responded mercifully, even if He also used strong words. In the same way, He calls His followers to show mercy and love toward opponents. Often when people challenge authority, it creates an opportunity for correction and clarification. Thus conflict can result in stronger and better relationships through the mercy, love, and power of Christ.

### **Positive Authority**

Authority can be used in ways that bring liberty to people, not just limitation.

Sometimes people think of authority as nothing more than telling others what they cannot do and keeping people in line. But in God's instruction to Moses (Ex. 6:13), we are reminded that authority can bring freedom to others when it is applied wisely and under the Lord's direction.

For example, a judge can use authority to release an innocent person from jail. A high school principal can use authority to obtain resources so that teachers are able to teach effectively. A manager can use authority to reward a worker's performance and encourage creativity and excellence.

So in its best use, authority can be affirming and supportive rather than controlling and punitive. How are you inclined to use authority?

### **Spiritual Authority**

If you exercise leadership among other believers, you'll want to carefully study Paul's comment about his authority (2 Cor. 13:10). Like many of us, Paul liked to be in charge, and he felt frustrated when people failed to follow his lead, as the Corinthians had. As an apostle, he had spiritual authority over them, which at times led him to deal severely with them (1 Cor. 4:21; 5:5; compare Titus 1:13).

But it's important to notice how Paul exercised his authority, especially as he grew older in the faith. He didn't lord it over others or try to use his authority to personal advantage. Nor did he abuse his power by using it to work out his own anger. Instead, he recognized that spiritual authority is given "for edification and not for destruction" (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10), for building others up, not for tearing them down.

Is that how you use your position and authority? Do you exercise leadership in order to accomplish the best interests of those who follow you? As they carry out your directives, are they built up in Christ, or torn down?

### **The Transfer of Authority**

The transfer of authority is always a delicate task. Changing leaders can be a time of great stress for an organization, as old alliances and political forces vie with new ones to determine who will shape the future.

The death of Aaron (Num. 20:22–29) was a major event in the life of Israel. He was not only high priest for the nation but the nation's first high priest. Furthermore, he had been Moses' primary spokesman (Ex. 4:16; 7:1). He was also Moses' brother.

Aaron's successor, Eleazar, was his third son. Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's two older sons, had been consumed in the Lord's anger after offering "profane fire" before the Lord (Lev. 10:1–3). Thus Eleazar was, in a sense, the "third choice" for the position of high priest.

Despite these and other factors, the transition from Aaron to Eleazar went smoothly. Perhaps it was because God Himself oversaw the transfer of power. Scripture tells of several other transitions, not all of which went as smoothly.

### **Under Authority**



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The centurion pointed out that, like Jesus, he was also “a man under authority” (Matt. 8:9). The encounter between the two suggests several lessons of authority and leadership:

1. *Effective leaders willingly admit when they need help (8:5).* The centurion faced a problem that went beyond his own considerable power. But he was willing to go outside his resources to enlist Jesus to deal with the situation.
2. *Effective leaders respond to matters of the heart and spirit (8:6, 8).* The centurion was moved by compassion for his suffering servant, and perceived that Jesus had insight and power that went beyond a physician's skill.
3. *Effective leaders are able to approach others on their terms (8:5, 8).* The centurion came in faith, pleading with Jesus to help his servant. As a Roman officer, he could have ordered Jesus, or offered Him money. But instead, he approached the Lord in a manner consistent with His nature.
4. *Effective leaders understand and accept the nature of authority (8:9).* The centurion understood what submission is all about. When he issued a command, his soldiers simply obeyed. He recognized that Jesus had the same authority over illness.
5. *Effective leaders invest trust in those under their authority (8:9–10).* Great leaders display great faith in their people. The centurion trusted that Jesus could do what He said He would do.
6. *Effective leaders know whom to trust (8:10).* Trust is only as useful as the trustworthiness of the one in whom it is placed. The centurion's faith was marvelous because it was invested in the right person—Jesus. Leadership based on blind faith, either in others or in a system, is foolhardy.

In light of these observations:

- Do you rely too much on your own competence, or do you honestly assess both your strengths and your weaknesses?
- Do you respond to people only in terms of “the facts,” or are you sensitive to the feelings and unexpressed needs of others (as well as your own)?
- Are you willing to meet and work with people on their terms, in their arena? Or must everyone come to you and play by your rules?
- Are you willing to be in charge, but unwilling to submit?
- In whom and in what do you place your faith?

For more on this topic, see SUPERVISION, “*The Godly Use of Power*,” page 390.

Thomas Nelson Publishers. (2001). In *What does the Bible say about... The ultimate A to Z resource fully illustrated* (pp. 26–29). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

### Supervision

#### Stick to Your Word

One of the most difficult tasks that anyone in authority faces is to take disciplinary action against people for violating organizational standards. Whether the discipline involves a mild verbal warning or a career-ending firing, there is no way to make it easy. But in God's severe discipline of a blasphemer (Lev. 24:13–14), we can see two important principles that may help to make discipline more consistent and effective:

1. *Enforce standards from the beginning.* God had already told His people that He considered blasphemy a capital offense (Ex. 20:7). This case involving Shelomith's son (Lev. 24:10–12) was the first major test of that law. God followed through on His warning by instructing Moses to carry out a sentence of stoning. In effect, God was making an example of the young blasphemer.

The principle here is to make expectations clear and then start tough. There's no point in letting improper behavior slide, hoping it won't happen again. It invariably will. But if people can see that there are definite consequences for noncompliance, they are likely to think twice before violating the policy.

2. *Hold everyone to the same standard; don't play favorites.* The fact that the text names the offender's father as an Egyptian (Lev. 24:10) is significant. Perhaps some among the Israelites thought that the severity of the man's punishment was due to his racially mixed background: he was the son of a foreigner; he had cursed Israel's God; so of course he would be punished by stoning.

But God made it clear that there would be no double standard: “*Whoever curses his God... whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord... the stranger as well as him who is born in the land*” would be punished (Lev. 24:15–16, emphasis added). God had no intention of playing favorites.

How consistent is your discipline, if you are in authority? Justice for all means justice for each one.

Certainly there are times for mercy and taking into account extenuating circumstances. But fairness



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demands that even these be exercised evenly.

**The Godly Use of Power**

Because history includes many cases of people in authority abusing their power, some people are skeptical about the nature of power. They have concluded that power by its very nature is corruptive. But while the Bible is realistic about the tendency of sinners to abuse power, it also gives examples of rulers who used their authority wisely and with godly integrity.

Although it is generally believed to refer prophetically to the Messiah, Psalm 72 also sets forth principles for a godly use of power. The piece was composed either by or for Solomon, who exercised more power during his reign than any of the other Israelite kings, including his father David. Psalm 72 suggests a number of practical ways a ruler can use power:

- To judge with righteousness and justice.
- To bring peace to the people, and to restrain crime and violence.
- To bring justice to the poor and the children of the needy, and to allocate resources in a way that is compassionate.
- To undo the work of oppressors, and to prevent the powerful from hurting the little people.
- To gain the respect and support of his citizens.

That is how a ruler can exercise power. On the other side of the power equation are those affected by the leader's use of power. They include:

- The people of the nation, who will respond with respect and admiration.
- The poor among the people.
- The children of the needy, who have little stake in the community.
- Those who oppress others, who will be hindered in their abusive tendencies.
- Neighboring nations, who will pay respect.
- Many areas of life are affected:
  - Nature and agriculture.
  - Human relationships.
  - The economy.
  - International relations.
  - The future.

If you are in a position of authority and power over other people, consider the influence you have, and how you can use it in ways that honor the Lord. Are there changes you need to make in the way you exercise authority? Are you living up to the godly ideals of Psalm 72?

For more on this topic, see ENCOURAGEMENT, "Encouraging the Boss," page 124.

Thomas Nelson Publishers. (2001). In *What does the Bible say about... The ultimate A to Z resource fully illustrated* (pp. 389–390). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.