

A 60-day plan of transformation into Christlikeness

Day #13: The Spirit versus the Flesh (Part 1)

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A. SOLITUDE WITH GOD.

1. I recommend that you get up at least 30 minutes early to have some time of solitude with God. Do not turn on radio or TV. Get some coffee and if it is possible, go outside in a nature setting where you can have time with God as you reflect on His creation, a creation that reveals the beauty and majesty of God (Psalm 19; Rom 1:20).
2. Of course, if you are not a morning person, you may want to pick another time during the day. The time of day is not important, what is important is to take the time. Apart from taking personal time with the Lord, it is hard to see how one could have a rich and mature personal relationship with the Lord.
3. This is the time for reflection and prayer. Pray for your family, our country, and our leaders. Go over the prayer list from church and pray for those on the list. Pray for your pastor and fellow believers in the church. If this takes up all of your time this morning, that is fine. You can always do the studies below at another time.

B. THE SPIRIT VS. THE FLESH.

1. This lesson covers the nature of the flesh vs. the spirit and the need for transformation. Due in no small part to Platonic and Cartesian influences, there are many false views of the nature of the battle between the flesh and the spirit and how to gain victory.
2. Read the following passages very slowly and repeatedly, paying close attention to the context of these passages that deal with the Holy Spirit and the members of our bodies: Galatians 5:16-26; Eph 4:17-32; 1 Thess 5:15-22; Rom 6:12-14. Note that none of the passages have 1 Jn 1:9 in them or any formula for walking in the spirit. Note the commands that surround the mandates not to grieve or quench the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.
3. In regard to the word “spirit,” it is an error to think that it refers to the Holy Spirit every time you see it in the Bible. For example, when Jesus tells Peter that the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, he is not talking about the Holy Spirit (Matt 26:41). In this instance, the spirit refers to the immaterial part of man and the flesh refers to the material part of man.
4. The spirit is the immaterial part of man that has desires for things that go beyond the material realm (God, love, common good in a marriage, goodness, integrity, faithfulness). The flesh, however, is only interested in sensual pleasures as such and is focused

primarily on physical goods. The human spirit refers to the immaterial part of man that is not determined and the flesh refers to the physical part of man.

5. There is also a fair amount of false thinking regarding spiritual formation as well. The truth of the matter is that everyone is going through a spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is basically how we are being formed immaterially. Both Hitler and Mother Theresa went through a spiritual formation in that their spirits were formed, their immaterial natures, and their souls by how they responded to circumstances of life. Both Hitler's and Mother Theresa's immaterial characters went through a transformation. One was filled with immaterial/spiritual thoughts of hatred and murder, the other was filled with immaterial/spiritual thoughts of love and compassion for the poor. But in each case their immaterial character went through a transformation. There can be a godly spiritual formation as well as an ungodly spiritual formation.
6. Likewise, there is often a misunderstanding of "flesh." Flesh does not primarily refer to physical flesh. Many times, it refers to natural human abilities, considered in themselves and on their own, unaided by divine assistance and direction. Flesh is not necessarily bad, sinful, fallen, or bad. It is a good creation of God and needs only to keep or be kept to its proper function in life before God. When the Bible says that Hagar was born according to the flesh (read Gal 4:23), it is speaking of normal human abilities. When the Bible says that the mind set on the flesh is death, it speaks of human abilities considered apart from gracious actions of God. Those who invest solely in their flesh get back only "corruption" (Gal 6:8) because this is the only outcome of human abilities. This does not mean that the flesh does not include desires. Desires in the form of overriding drive for gratification is a root of weakness of will. Desires are chaotic (read James 4:1-3) and deceitful (read Eph 4:22), because they each promise a fulfillment they cannot deliver and they can drive us ever onward into the blindness of sensual futility (read Eph 4:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet 1:4).
7. Under the discipleship of Jesus, the believer undergoes a spiritual transformation in which the spiritual is far more powerful than the flesh. The disciple enjoys many of the blessings of the flesh that the God of all desires provides but all within the control of His spiritual life. This transformation is part of who he is and not due to being in some spiritual conduit system. He lives, thinks, feels, and acts like Christ because Christ has been formed in him (Gal. 4:19) as a matter of habit and virtue.
8. Under the discipleship of the Lord, the believer becomes the kind of person who increasingly naturally and easily loves the good and has little to no appetite for sin. He becomes this way by nature. This contrasts with the Cartesian-Baconian spiritual systems that depend upon, for example, confession of sin, to return to power only to lose power the instant one sins. This is not the way the spiritual life works. In our characters we are either becoming more spiritual or more carnal as a person regardless of any temporal factor.
9. In the discipleship of Christ, the believer increasingly undergoes a spiritual formation in which he progressively puts on the very character of Jesus Christ (Rom 12:14), which

means that he increasingly thinks, feels, and acts like Christ. Again, this becomes his character—not some spiritual or magical sphere he jumps in and out of.

10. Discipleship churches have far less problems with the flesh than standard marketplace churches. Studies have shown that Christians in marketplace churches have about the same divorce rate, psychological problems, and porn addictions as the rest of the world. However, among discipleship churches, there is hardly any problems with these issues. But this is not surprising, given the commitment of true disciples of Christ in contrast to nominal Christians who view Christianity more as a fire insurance policy than a life commitment in this world.

C. SCRIPTURE MEMORY.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

D. The 60-day transformation of the mind, heart, and emotions into Christlikeness

- Day 1 – A life that lacks nothing (Psalm 23), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-1.pdf>
- Day 2 - Satan, the enemy (1 John 2:15-16), <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-2.pdf>
- Day 3 – Review, reflect, journaling, and Psalm 19, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-3.pdf>
- Day 4 – The six areas of inner transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-4.pdf>
- Day 5 – The Word of God, Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-5.pdf>
- Day 6 – 2 warnings & promise of transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-6.pdf>
- Day 7 - Solitude, Disciplines, Transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-7.pdf>
- Day 8–VIM (Vision-Intent-Means) & transformation, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-8.pdf>
- Day 9–Solitude with God and Christ’s transformative yoke, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-9.pdf>
- Day 10– Discipleship-1, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-10.pdf>
- Day 11– Discipleship-2, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-11.pdf>
- Day 12– The Life-giving Power of the Holy Spirit, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-12.pdf>
- Day 13– The Spirit vs. the Flesh, <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/day-13.pdf>

*Under the discipleship of Jesus Christ,
Pastor Don*