

The Spiritual and the Carnal Christian

Galatians 5:16

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

This teaching seeks to among other things:

- define what carnality is and who a carnal Christian is
- highlight the characteristics of a carnal lifestyle
- emphasize the consequences of living a carnal lifestyle
- offer practical steps to move from carnality to true spiritual maturity.

Preamble

The Christian inherits a new life once he or she receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and experiences regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This is what we know as a “rebirth” or “new birth experience”. Jesus emphasized the importance of this when He told Nicodemus, “*You must be born again of water and of the Spirit*” (John 3:5-7).

The newly born person in Christ embarks on a journey with the Lord by joining a church, getting disciplined, and growing in the knowledge of Christ.

However, a time comes when some things he left behind begins to make a comeback into his life – those things he used to do before he received salvation. Why is this so?

He realizes that sometimes, he can’t resist some evil desires, and he gives in from time to time. This is the conflict which every Christian must have faced at a time in their lives.

This teaching will help us understand why this is so, and what we can do to overcome it.

What is the meaning of the terms “*carnal*” and “*spiritual*”?

To be carnal is to be earthly-minded, or to be soul-inclined in character and disposition. To be spiritual is the opposite; it is to be spirit-inclined, or to be in tune with the spirit realm.

During the course of this study, we shall find out that both terms are polar opposites of each other. In other words, they are opposites and have opposing characteristics.

The Constitution of a Human Being

To understand this teaching, we have to go back to the basics and examine what constitutes the human being. First of all, let’s look at the human and what makes up a complete human.

A human being has 3 parts

- Spirit
- Soul
- Body

SPIRIT

This is what we call the life-force, or the immaterial force which animates or causes life to be. The spirit is invisible, but its effects can be felt. Without the spirit, a human being cannot live in the body. Also, without the spirit, the human being is not complete.

Jesus said this about the spirit, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life*" John 6:63. So, we see that the spirit is what imparts life and energy to the human soul.

Jesus also said something remarkable about the spirit, "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*" John 3:8. Here Jesus is explaining the invisibility of the spirit. It is not perceived with the physical eyes because it is not *corporeal*. It is *immaterial*, like wind, but its impact can be felt.

The human spirit comes from God, the Father of spirits. At conception, the human spirit enters the fertilized egg and from there, the embryo develops into a zygote which in turn begins to develop into a full-blown human baby. After a few months, a new person is born into the world.

Without the spirit, a human is dead. The bible says this in James, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" James 2:26. This substantiates the fact that the spirit is what imparts life to a human being.

Whenever a human being dies, the spirit and the soul leave the body. The bible also talks about this here: "*Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it*" Ecclesiastes 12:7.

There are 3 compartments in the human spirit:

- *Intuition*
- *Fellowship*
- *Conscience*

Intuition: This is the part of the human spirit which senses or knows things which are beyond the physical, which is the metaphysical or supernatural. This intuition gives a man the ability to know, see or hear what the ordinary physical eye or ears cannot perceive.

Fellowship: This is the compartment in the human spirit which allows man to communicate with God and fellowship with Him.

Conscience: this part of the human spirit is responsible for the knowledge of good and evil. It is like a personal watchdog which alerts the human person when they have done what is wrong. This is why people say things like, "*My conscience is beating me up for what I did*".

Now these 3 compartments make up the human heart. This heart is not the physical heart which pumps blood throughout the human body. Rather, this is the hidden part of man where *fellowship, intuition, and conscience* reside.

Please take note of the fact that the human heart can influence willpower, i.e., can influence human decision making.

SOUL

The human soul is the part of the human being which makes up the personality of that person. This is the part where character, traits, and unique abilities reside. The soul came about when the spirit from God's breath entered the body shell, as Genesis teaches us:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:7

The soul is further divided into 3 compartments:

- *Intellect*
- *Emotions*
- *Willpower*

Intellect

This is the part where knowledge, understanding and creativity reside. This faculty of the soul gives you the ability to learn and unlearn, to come up with unique ideas, to imagine things, and to exercise creativity.

The human intellect has 2 divisions: the **physical** and the **metaphysical**.

The physical aspect is the human brain which is like a hardware running code (in computer terminology). The brain is responsible for coordinating the body and soul. It is wired directly to the soul via the mind.

On the other hand, the metaphysical aspect of the intellect is the mind. The human mind is a powerful metaphysical organ which has even 2 parts:

The *conscious* mind: where intentional actions are formed. For example, thinking of a solution to a problem until you come up with one.

The *subconscious* mind: where unintentional actions are formed. For example, remembering suddenly a song you learnt years ago, without even trying to remember it.

The mind is like the **software**, while the brain is the **hardware**. They both work together to regulate the human being. The human mind is the center of the human soul, and it is resident in the human brain. This is why one can lose their mind if something traumatic happens to the brain.

Emotions

The emotions are the part of the soul which is responsible for birthing and expressing feelings. The emotions are birthed directly from the human mind, which in turn is connected to the senses of the body.

This is why humans can feel a certain way immediately after sensing something. It could be danger; they immediately feel afraid. It could also be that the person was given a gift. The act touches their soul and they feel happy.

Emotions are an integral part of every human. They are good, but they hardly last – they are temporary. Emotions are dependent on external stimuli. This is why a human being can feel happy now, and afterwards feel sad.

Willpower

This is the part of the human soul which makes decisions. It could be anything: to go to the lavatory, to eat, to use toothbrush. The human will is one of the strongest parts of a human because it dictates how and when a human should respond to situations. It determines how a human should also live their lives.

The human will is sacred and inviolable: it must be respected at all times. Even God cannot violate the human will, though He can appeal to it and reason with it.

The willpower can be influenced by the intellect, the emotions, and the human heart. The will is central to action or inaction.

BODY

The human body is the physical shell which houses the soul and spirit. It was made from dust of the earth. The body has 5 compartments, or senses.

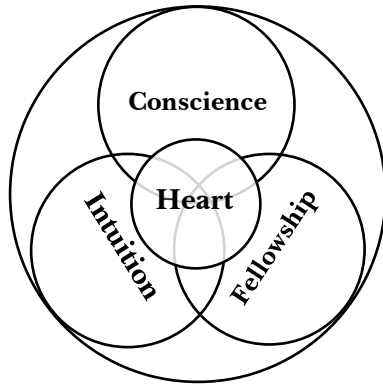
- Smell
- Touch
- Sight
- Taste
- Sound

These 5 senses are live in the sense organs which are connected to the emotional engine in the soul which reacts by releasing feelings appropriately.

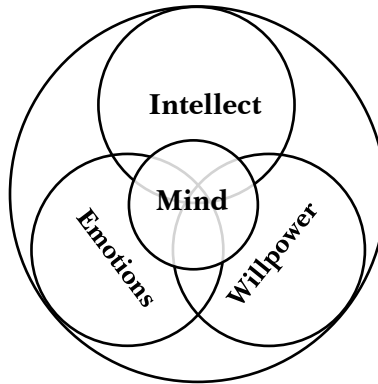
In summary, if any of these components fail, the other parts are affected as well. They all work together in keeping the human functioning optimally. The heart is the center of the human spirit, the mind is the center of the soul, while the brain is the center of the human body. All of them are interconnected to produce a complete human being.

These diagrams will help to illustrate all we've been saying.

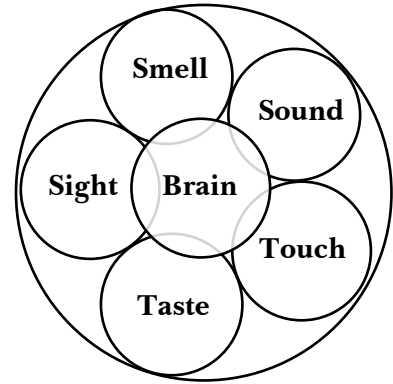
SPIRIT



SOUL



BODY



Having discussed the constitution or make up of a human being, let's proceed to the next section.

[Understanding the Carnal Christian](#)

Let's look at this term critically. Who is a carnal Christian? Apostle Paul addressed the Corinthian believers as "*carnal*" in his letter, and he uses some characteristics to qualify their carnality:

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

From this passage, we can see the following:

- i. He addressed them as "babes" in Christ
- ii. He fed them milk
- iii. They were engaged in constant quarrels and there was lack of unity among them

Babies behave foolishly. This is because they are not mature, and they don't know right from wrong. They don't like solid food; hence they thrive on milk.

Also, children quarrel over insignificant things. However, adults would not quarrel over such things because they are trivial things which don't deserve their energy in a quarrel. Children behave according

to their nature, the inbuilt sinful human nature which they acquired from birth. So, it is safe to say that they live **according to the flesh**, which is this sinful nature.

So, who is a carnal Christian? A carnal Christian is one who lives according to the flesh, one who is soul-inclined in their thoughts and actions.

What is the flesh? **The flesh is the self, the original and default human nature a man is born with.** We say a carnal believer is soul-inclined: they follow their human nature in thinking and action. They hardly follow the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

Apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans, throws more light on how the carnal mind operates:

Romans 8:5-8

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.

6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

From this passage, it is clear that carnality is a dangerous place to be for a Christian. Here are the characteristics of a carnal Christian.

Characteristics of a carnal Christian

1. A carnal Christian is controlled by feelings –

Romans 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.

This person relies so much on their feelings in their day-to-day activities. They are not disciplined to ignore their feelings, but rather pattern their lives based on how they feel. Such people are very unstable in character, because once their feelings evaporate, their actions will change. They can love you one minute, and hate you the other minute, all depending on how they feel towards you.

Do you notice this pattern in your life?

2. Engages in works of the flesh –

Galatians 5:19-21

*19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

A carnal Christian finds it easy to engage in these “**works of the flesh**” because they find it satisfying to their flesh (the human nature). They haven’t yet learned to deny themselves and reject and renounce such lifestyles.

In fact, they may even enjoy and crave such pleasures. They may hide to commit such sins. In church, they are seen as faithful, but they lead double lives.

3. Dependent on milk rather than solid food –

1 Corinthians 3:2

I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

A carnal Christian has not yet grown beyond the basic teaching about God and what it means to follow Jesus. They are offended when they hear some teachings because it goes against their behavior and expectations. It makes them feel bad, because they have not yet learned how to keep their feelings aside and do the will of God.

Most of the time, the preacher will not expose them to that type of messages because it may cause them to leave. Ultimately, they need to hear such messages because it is necessary for their spiritual growth.

4. Lacks deep understanding / application of God’s word –

Hebrews 5:12-13

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

The carnal Christian has not yet understood the teachings they receive, even after being in Church for years. They are ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. This is because their understanding is not quickened by the Holy Spirit due to their inability to yield to Him.

Many times, Jesus asked His disciples, “**Are you yet without understanding?**”.

But when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, Peter stood up and preached for the first time, resulting to a great harvest of souls.

The Holy Spirit quickened his understanding, and everything Jesus had been telling them made sense to him, enabling him to explain in his message to the hearers.

5. Lack of steadfastness, struggles between living for God and living for self –

James 1:6-8

6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

A carnal Christian always struggles with living for God and is hardly constant in their faith. They cannot maintain their stand for God, and they easily compromise because they have not yet yielded to the Holy Spirit to empower them to be able to live for God.

6. The old man is very much alive and in charge of his life –

Ephesians 4:22

that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...

Romans 6:6

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

The old man (the human nature we are all born with) is very much alive in the carnal Christian. They never act or live in a Christ-like manner, but according to their human nature. They give all sorts of excuses like, “I’m a man you know”, “I’m an African man”, “I’m human after all”.

Such excuses are meant to massage their ego and make excuse for their sinful lifestyle.

Consequences of a carnal lifestyle

There are consequences for living carnally minded, and it is not pretty. It is a slippery slope which leads to destruction, no matter how much that person is dedicated to the church.

Here are some of them:

1. Stunted spiritual growth –

Hebrews 5:12-13

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

2 Timothy 3:7

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

A carnal lifestyle surely leads to stunted spiritual growth. The believer may be an adult physically, but spiritually they are still babies. This is because their spirit is malnourished, weak, and subdued by the flesh (human nature).

They don't eat the word of God by themselves, unless someone feeds them with it. This means that they don't have personal time to study God's word in order to grow by it, for *man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of God.*

2. Weak testimony –

- *Ineffective witness due to inconsistent lifestyle:* this person cannot witness for Christ because their lifestyle contradicts the teachings of Christ. This is because a person will most likely speak against what he is not engaged in. However, a person living a double life will not speak against what they are indulging in.
- *Damages the reputation of the church:* because of the lifestyle of this person, non-church members will speak reproachfully of the church, and will not likely even think of joining the church because according to them, "I'm better than some of them".

3. Lack of peace and joy –

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because of the indulgence in works of the flesh and other sins, the carnal Christian lacks joy and peace which comes from intimate fellowship with the Holy Spirit. They have not yet learned how to cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit, hence the lack of peace and joy, because *the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Romans 14:7).

4. Inner conflict and lack of spiritual fruit –

Galatians 5:22-23

*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.*

The carnal Christian is not bearing spiritual fruit because the flesh is their master, not their spirit. There is inner conflict because of this, since their conscience accuses or excuses them for their lifestyle.

5. Death (physical and spiritual) –

Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

1 Corinthians 6:7-10

7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?

8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Living the carnal lifestyle consistently without renouncing it leads to death, as the scriptures above declare. There are 2 aspects, physical and spiritual death.

Identifying carnality

How do we identify carnality? We identify carnality by self-examination with God's word. God's word is like a mirror which enables us to see our true self for what it is – evil and sinful. This is because we were conceived in iniquity, and the human nature is wicked according to Jeremiah 17:9, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?*"

The word of God is a discerner of the heart – it searches the human heart, exposes the evil in it, and shows you plainly so you can repent. It is not enough to hear the word of God, but doing it is even more important.

James 1:22-25

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

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Overcoming carnality

To overcome carnality, a believer must consistently do the following:

1. Renewing the mind through God's word:

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Constant study and application of God's word does something to the human spirit: it causes it to grow because God's word is food for the human spirit. Jesus said *"man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God"*.

When a believer continually eats the word of God, with time it begins to affect their thought pattern. They begin to think like God thinks, because they are familiar with His word.

This is the process of mind-renewal. It doesn't happen overnight, but over a period of years.

2. Walking in the Spirit or living according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit:

Galatians 5:16-18

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The believer must consistently walk by the Spirit. In other words, they must pattern their thoughts and actions according to the Spirit of God. They depend on Him for guidance, help and instruction. They hardly do anything without first consulting Him, because they have developed intimacy with Him.

The Holy Spirit cannot and does not contradict the word of God, which is why the believer will never go wrong because of this.

3. Living by the word of God:

Proverbs 3:1-4

1 My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands;

2 For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart,

4 And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

The believer must be intentional about obeying the word of God. They are fanatical about God's word, and it holds great authority in their life.

4. Practicing spiritual disciplines:

- Regular prayer and fasting (Jude 1:20, Eph. 6:18, 1 Cor. 9:27)
- Bible study (Psalm 119:11, 119:105)
- Fellowship with other believers (Psalm 133:1, 1 Cor. 14:26, Heb. 10:25)

- Evangelism/personal witnessing (Matt. 28:19-20, 2 Tim. 4:2, Mark 16:15)
- Service to the church (Gal. 6:10, Rom. 16:1-2, Acts 20:28)

Let me emphasize on the first point here: fasting and prayer. Fasting is a very powerful spiritual discipline, and it is extremely effective against curtailing the flesh. It is one of the most effective ways to crucify the flesh.

When we fast, we humble ourselves before God. The bible says if we humble ourselves the Lord will lift us up (1 Peter 5:6). The bible also tells us that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). When we fast, we receive grace from God to overcome carnality.

Most Christians hardly fast. They only fast when the Pastor declares fasting and prayer. But what happens if the pastor doesn't do that? Some Christians do not fast at all. They are so much in love with food that they can't even skip a meal in order to dedicate themselves to fasting.

It shouldn't be so.

One of the enemies of the Christian walk is the flesh, and fasting is a sure-fire way to overcome it. Paul said I beat my body into submission (this implies putting off the old man, though fasting may be one of the ways) so it won't be a hindrance to his ministry (1 Cor. 9:27).

5. Intentionally dropping carnality by discarding the old man (human nature):

Ephesians 4:22

that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

Colossians 3:9

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

This is the part where you have to be intentional about. You were born with this nature, and you grew up with it. But you have to put it off and put on Christ.

This is something that you must do by yourself, not God's responsibility. You must prayerfully and intentionally put off the old nature and put on the new nature by denying yourself or simply refusing to indulge in those activities you used to enjoy doing when the temptation comes.

Once you begin to build up resistance to these temptations, you become stronger in your spirit and subsequent temptations are not so tempting, because your willpower is subject to your spirit. At this point, your spirit rules over your being, not your soul or flesh.

6. Trusting in God's faithfulness:

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Philippians 1:6

being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

This is the part where God helps us by “keeping” us close to Himself. He does this by calling our attention when we are about to stray away, or correcting or rebuking us when we fail to live the right way. This is because you are His child, and His correction is a sign of love. This is what the writer of Hebrews explains in this passage:

Hebrews 12:5-11

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

7. Working out the process of maturing continually:

Philippians 2:12-15

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

The believer must work out his salvation, because he must produce the fruits of righteousness by living right and holy. This is what this passage means, and this is one of the ways to combat carnality.

8. Walking in love

Colossians 3:14

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

This is perhaps the most important weapon against carnality. Intentionally walking in love will eliminate strife and quarrels, the very thing Paul wrote about the Corinthian church.

The essence of true spirituality

True spirituality is a function of true worship, because God requires us to worship Him in spirit and in truth, according to the words of Jesus in John 4:23. For you to be truly spiritual, you must discard the carnal nature and put on the new nature in Christ.

Like we saw, the carnal man cannot progress, unless he/she examines himself in the light of God's word and makes intentional effort to grow spiritually, thereby producing spiritual fruit. You can't be spiritual and carnal at the same time; either you are carnal, or you are spiritual. They are polar opposites.

We are going to look at 3 practical steps we can follow to attain true spirituality. Please, don't forget that you can't follow these steps if you have not yet been born again of water and the Spirit of God. That is the foundation of true spirituality.

Anything outside of this is not of God, and we have many examples such as occultism, witchcraft, etc. So, you must first be born again before you can make the effort of attaining true spirituality.

What are those 3 practical steps:

- Discard the old man
- Bear spiritual fruit
- Walking in love

Discard the old man and put on the new man

We have discussed what the "**old man**" is, and how to discard it. However, you need to put on the "**new man**" in place of the old man. If you don't put on the new man, you have not yet fulfilled all righteousness. The old man is corrupt, sinful, and patterned after Adam. On the other hand, the new man is righteous, holy, and patterned after Christ.

So, we have to be intentional about putting off the old man. Here are some scriptures to help explain this:

Colossians 3:5-9

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Colossians 3:10-14

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put-on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

How do we put these things to death? By starving them. One of the practical ways of starving your flesh is by fasting and prayer. Remember, we said this is one of the spiritual disciplines we can engage in to overcome carnality.

Most of the time we fast and pray for material things, yet we have even greater spiritual needs. I have seen God answer my prayer points for spiritual needs, while ignoring the request for material things. He however answered the prayer much later.

Putting off the old man is what we have to be intentional about, while cooperating with the Holy Spirit through prayer and a yielded heart.

Bear spiritual fruit

We discussed what the bible calls **works of the flesh**. Now these works of the flesh are products of a carnal lifestyle. On the other hand, there's the **fruit of the Spirit**. These fruits are a product of a spiritual lifestyle, which the Holy Spirit produces in us. We find these in Galatians 5:19-23.

Galatians 5:19-23

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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.

There are 9 fruits of the spirit including:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Longsuffering
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

All these fruits are attributes of the Holy Spirit, and He produces them in us when we submit to Him by discarding carnality and pursuing a true spiritual lifestyle.

Of all the fruits of the spirit, the principal fruit is Love, and we are going to look it critically.

Walking in love

When we talk about walking in love, we mean allowing the love of God to shape our view of people, not our feelings. It means we intentionally love people. It has to do with our day to day lives. We intentionally love people by displaying that love in our speech and actions.

God's Definition of Love

Love is affection, to cherish someone or something. It used to be called *charity* in old English. Love means so many things to different people, but God has given us a definition of love. God's love is called agape in Greek, and it is the highest expression of love. Agape is selfless, unconditional and unending love.

There are other expressions of love such as *eros*, or romantic love between a man and wife, *phileo* or brotherly love between friends, and *storge*, or familial love between siblings or between parent and child.

However, all these expressions of love are inferior to agape. God's definition of love can be found in 1 Corinthians 13:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13 (NLT)

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud

5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

13 Three things will last forever--faith, hope, and love--and the greatest of these is love.

A truly spiritual Christian loves people in spite of their failings. The hallmark of true spirituality is not just the exercise of spiritual gifts, but manifestation of the fruit of the spirit. The reason why we focus on love among all the fruits of the spirit is because it occupies a special place. It encapsulates all the attributes of the Holy Spirit.

The bible says that God is love. It didn't place faith or patience or self-control on that pedestal as love. If you're looking for God's definition of love, you'll find it in 1 Corinthians 13.

A command from Christ

John 13:34-35

34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus commanded His disciples, and by extension His body (the church) to love one another. He called it “*a new commandment*”. Jesus was very specific about us loving one another. By doing so, the world will know that we are followers of Jesus.

They won’t identify us by our tongue-speaking. They won’t identify us because we attend church or church programs. No. They also won’t identify us because we call ourselves Christians. If we truly love people, then we are truly spiritual.

By being sensitive to others

Romans 14:15-17

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote these lines to buttress the fact that we should be sensitive to other believers, especially new believers in Christ. The preceding verses talk about not judging each other, especially when it comes to food.

The truth is some believers consider eating some foods sinful. So, a mature believer knows that this is not true, but for the sake of the new believer, he does not eat that food in the presence of the new believer. He does this out of love, so as not to give the new convert a wrong impression.

This principle applies to so many things, not just food. It could apply to things like gambling, betting, alcohol, listening to some secular music which are wholesome, etc.

As a weapon against evil

Romans 12:19-21

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 5:43-45

43 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*

44 *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*

45 *"that you may be sons of your Father 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.*

Love is a weapon against evil. There is no power greater than the power of love. We are taught to overcome evil with good, not evil with evil. If we repay evil for evil, the evil continues to perpetuate itself until either of the parties or both are destroyed completely.

Jesus gave us the perfect example when He was on the cross. He forgave His enemies and prayed for them.

Love in sincerity

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

1 Peter 1:22

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart

We are commanded to love from the heart, not just with our mouths. This is genuine love. When we love people genuinely, they will know. Likewise, if we love hypocritically, people will also know. However, we demonstrate the love of God when we love sincerely.

As a fulfilment of the Law

Romans 13:8-10

8 *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

9 *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

10 *Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

The law of Moses was not easy to keep, partly because there was so much (over 600 laws), and mainly because the law didn't empower the Israelites to keep it. It was just there, a grim reminder of human weakness and shortcoming.

However, Jesus gave us a new commandment which is to "Love one another". From the above passage, Paul the apostle explains why love is a fulfilment of the law.

A truly spiritual believer doesn't need to worry about which laws to keep, as long as they are walking in love, they have fulfilled the whole law. Walking in love is a manifestation of true spirituality. Just like Paul said, if we possess all the spiritual gifts but are not walking in love, then our gifts aren't worth anything.

Love endures forever

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!

9 Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!

10 But when full understanding comes, these partial things will become useless.

Out of the fruit of the spirit, love is the greatest. The gifts of the spirit would not stay with you forever, because you are not going to need them in the next world. This is because in the spiritual realm, knowledge is complete. You don't need the gift of prophecy, word of wisdom or knowledge.

Moreover, once you enter that realm, you are no longer going to experience temptation and all the challenges of the Christian walk. You will no longer need the gift of faith or miracles, prophecy, and the rest of them.

But then, the fruit of the spirit will still be in you, because they have become a part of your character. They will be a part of you forever.

Concluding Thoughts

Having examined what it means to be carnal and spiritual, I hope this teaching will challenge you to examine yourself and make amends where necessary. You have seen the dangers of carnality, and the blessings of true spirituality. God's intention is that we become like Christ, according to Romans 8:29.

May God help us to correct what we need to correct in our lives, and to attain true spirituality, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.