



'THE JESUS APPRENTICESHIP'

2023

Session 4:

How do we deal with the carnal nature?

Questions

1. Galatians 5:17 says, "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." Are you aware of the inner conflict described in Galatians 5:17?
2. What do you think about existing in two kingdoms at once; does it ring true? Do you agree that the spiritual realm is the more important realm? If so, why?
3. How do you experience being empowered by God in your battle against sin?
4. Talk about what it means to be dead to sin. In what ways do you consider yourself dead to sin?
5. Are you aware of an orphan mentality in yourself or have you conquered that one?
6. What were the weapons that were described in the talk? Do you "use" these? Are there other weapons which help you?
7. What are you going to put in place to help you deal with the carnal nature?

Notes

1. **Defining the Carnal Nature** – (Also referred to as the flesh and sinful nature). As humans we have a physical body; a soul, consisting of our mind, will and emotions; and a spirit, that is the core part of us which connects to God and where the Holy Spirit lives within us once we become Christians. The body and soul together form the carnal nature and are in conflict with the Spirit within us (Galatians 5:17) because the Spirit wishes to please God, but the carnal nature wants to be God – to define good and evil for itself and do life without reference to others or God.
2. **How do we deal with the carnal nature?** – Decisively, we kill it! (Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:24, Romans 8:6). Most of us find killing the carnal nature involves a daily battle and we struggle with condemnation, but be encouraged! God is for us and hopefully the following will help.
3. **Two things to understand & one thing to remember!** –
 - i) **Understand our situation** – As humans we live in two realms at once; the physical realm and the spiritual realm. 1 John 5:19 tells us that the physical realm is under the control of the enemy; hence we live in enemy territory. However, Colossians 1:13 tells us that Jesus has rescued us from the dominion of darkness (the enemy's kingdom) and brought us into God's kingdom. We still live bodily in the physical realm but spiritually we are alive in the realm controlled by God. Consequently, as Christians we have power over our carnal nature because Jesus has won the battle for us. (Romans 6, 7 & 8). Before we became Christians we had no power to fight sin, but as Christians we fight from a place of victory, Christ's victory, and can defeat the carnal nature because we are empowered by the Holy Spirit within us. (Romans 6:6)
 - ii) **Understand ourselves** – Don't panic when ungodly thoughts, emotions and desires pop up in us, do not start to think you are failing and get into condemnation. Condemnation causes us to run from God when we should run to Him for help. Instead recognise these thoughts, emotions and desires as the carnal nature and ignore them! Consider yourself dead to them, they no longer have power over you. (Romans 6:11&12).

iii) **Remember God is for you, you are not an orphan, on your own** – (Romans 8:31&37, John 14:18) Remember who God is! He is kind and loving, He is for us and empowering us. He is with us in the battle. Do not believe the lie that you are on your own trying to meet an impossibly high standard of behaviour and that God disapproves of you and is going to condemn you.

4. **The weapons we have** – God never asks us to do something that He does not empower us to do, and in this battle He has given us many weapons, including:

i) **Ephesians 6 – spiritual armour** – look it up and meditate on it!

ii) **Fear of the Lord** – This is knowing who God is, acknowledging that He is Lord of all the earth and prioritising His will over everything else. When our focus is on what the Lord wants rather than on what I want we are far less prone to fall for temptation and into sin. Colossians 3:1&2 – set your heart and mind on things above.

iii) **Praise & gratitude** – Develop an attitude of gratitude. Meditate on scripture and remind yourself of everything Jesus has done for us (Romans 6,7 & 8). Develop a love relationship with the Lord and abide in Him! When we are praising the Lord we take our eyes off ourselves which is a huge part of breaking the sin & condemnation cycle.

iv) **Fasting** – “Fasting is a critical discipline for the life of the Spirit – through fasting we respond in obedience to God’s urgings, we come to know ourselves (and our sins) more fully, and we turn to God in complete reliance as we seek His will in difficult situations.” Fasting is not about giving up stuff in order to develop a strong will. (Indeed, our own will power in denying ourselves things does not deal with our wrong attitudes to God and others; it simply makes us proud. We cannot fight our carnal nature with carnal weapons – 2 Corinthians 10:3&4). Fasting is coming to God in surrender and trusting Him for provision. It reminds us and declares to the whole spiritual realm that God is more desirable than anything else.

v) **Each other** – We are not alone in the battle; most importantly God is with us empowering us but He has given us each other to help and encourage each other too (James 5:16 & Galatians 6:1&2). Be wise who you share your struggles with but get to

know each other and make yourself accountable to someone else. A brother or sister in Christ can give you a different perspective on your issues, pray for you, encourage you and hold you to account. If someone comes to you and shares their struggles with you it is a privilege, take it seriously and be committed to walking with them in love.