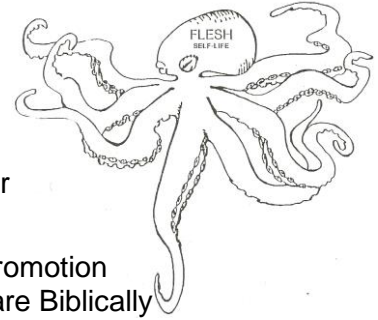


Nature of the Flesh-Life



1. Definition of Flesh

- Definition of flesh: Flesh is the condition where you are living out of your resources to cope and deal with life, solve your problems, protect yourself from pain (rejection) and meet your core needs for love, acceptance, value, identity, security, and adequacy.
- All forms of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, self-protection, or self-promotion in an attempt to meet your core needs and avoid pain (rejection) are Biblically called “walking after the flesh” or “walking according to the flesh” or “going your own way.”
- Read and discuss Galatians 5:16-21 and Philippians 3:4-11.
- Note: Salvation does not remove flesh; it is a way of living independent of God.

2. Examples of the “deeds of the flesh”...

- Anger, covert messages (sighing, dirty looks), silent treatment, manipulation, sarcasm, guilt trips, passivity, threats, escapism (reading, activities, adultery), internalizing, criticizing, nit-picking, avoiding, indecisive, trying harder, pleaser, blameshift, withdraw, etc.
- These are all forms of control that eventually fail.
- Our temptation is to say these behaviors are the problem and then attempt to stop them.
- The “deeds of the flesh” are not the problem!
- The self-life is the problem!
- Flesh cannot be crucified or killed. (Living independently of God can only be denied).

3. Characteristics of Flesh (Self-Sufficiency and Self-Effort)

#1 Flesh is a controller...

1. to keep God or others from getting too close. (Fear vulnerability and intimacy.)
2. to prevent others from running your life.
3. to keep circumstances from overwhelming or controlling us.
4. to keep emotions suppressed.
5. to protect failures, flaws, and flesh from being revealed.
6. to protect from (more) rejection.

#2 Flesh is opposed to yielding control to the Spirit and always resists God (Gal 5:19, Rom 8:6-8).

#3 Flesh holds you captive and victimizes you.

- The past, emotions, substances, people, or addictions control you.

#4 Flesh is deceptive. (It “looks” good. Positive flesh is encouraged and even applauded.)

- Work-a-holism, perfectionism, moral behavior, etc.

#5 Flesh builds its identity on performance, not on the indwelling life of Christ.

#6 Flesh is proud, always right, self-important, never the problem, confident in its abilities.

#7 Flesh is a rejecter and isolator. (We withdraw from people or cause them to withdraw from us.)

#8 Flesh will eventually self-destruct.

**Flesh results in CONFLICT and FRUSTRATION!
Failed flesh results in (suppressed or expressed) ANGER!**

4. Jesus' teachings on the flesh.

- Matt 18:4 Whoever humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- Luke 14:11 Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; he who humbles himself will be exalted.
- John 6:63 Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

5. The Prodigal Sons (Read Luke 15:11-32)

The Younger Son's Flesh	The Older Son's Flesh	The Father's Love
Withdrew physically	Withdrew emotionally	Present, available, involved
Self-Indulgent ➤ Spending, carousing, gambling, passive, irresponsible, careless	Self-Denial ➤ Obedient, pleaser, critical, nit-picking, scorecard, spiteful.	Unconditional love for both sons
Wasteful	Diligent	Unconditional acceptance
Demanding, argumentative	Defensive, self-sufficient	Unconditionally blessed both sons
Resisted authority	Resented authority	Understanding
Self-abasing	Proud	Patient
Self-centered (Licentious)	Self-centered (Legalistic)	Grace (meets our needs)
Flesh resulted in frustration!	Flesh resulted in anger!	Flesh resulted in God sending Christ as our Savior and life!

6. Which son does your flesh most resemble?

7. Notice that the flesh produces everything but the fruit of the Spirit!

- Read and discuss Galatians 5:16-21 (negative flesh).
- Read and discuss Galatians 5:22-25 (fruit of the Spirit).
- Read and discuss Philippians 3:4-11 (positive flesh).

8. Prayer of Repentance

"Flesh is all that I am as I operate apart from Christ." Lee LeFebre

Father God,

I have been self-reliant and cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit apart from you. I have been struggling to live the Christian life out of my resources. I have been trying to meet my needs through people, achievements, and possessions, or striving. I give up on self-sufficiency and yield myself into Your hands. I choose to walk by faith in the Holy Spirit's inner power instead of striving in the flesh. I invite Your grace to be unto me all things pertaining to life and godliness. Amen.