

Understand Flesh & Renounce Vows

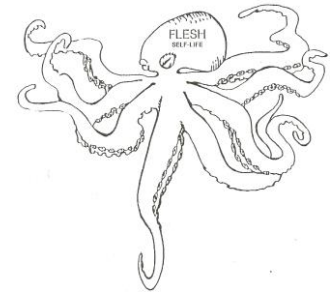
Self-sufficiency, self-reliance, self-protection, or self-promotion are biblically called “walking after the flesh” or “walking according to the flesh” or “going your own way.” Flesh lives independently of God and originates with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Flesh is all that I am as I operate apart from Christ. (Lee LeFebre) **Flesh relies on your ability and resources to cope with life, solve problems, protect yourself from pain and rejection, and meet your love, acceptance, worth, and security needs.**

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

- a. Read and discuss Philippians 3:4-14 (positive “looking” flesh).
- b. Read and discuss Galatians 5:16-21 (negative flesh).
- c. Read and discuss Galatians 5:22-25 (the fruit of the Spirit).
- d. Identify flesh patterns using the *Manifestations of the Flesh* handout.

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.” John 6:63



Our behaviors are the symptoms of the greater problem of living after the flesh. You may be able to remove a bad habit through willpower only to find another fleshly behavior replaces it. For example, instead of being irresponsible, we become judgmental.

All Flesh is a Form of Control

1. Flesh controls to keep God or others from getting too close, perhaps fearing vulnerability and intimacy. Flesh controls to prevent others from running your life, to keep circumstances from overwhelming you, and to prevent more rejection. Flesh controls to suppress your emotions and protect your failures, flaws, and flesh patterns from exposure.
2. Flesh always resists God and votes to sin. (Galatians 5:19, Romans 8:6-8)
3. Flesh holds you captive and victimizes you. (Emotions, people, addictions, and habits)
4. Flesh is deceptive because it looks good. (Work-a-holism, perfectionism, independence)
5. Flesh builds its identity on performance, not on your new identity as a child of God.
6. Flesh is proud, always right, self-important, never the problem, and confident in its abilities.
7. Flesh is a rejecter and isolator. (You withdraw or cause others to withdraw from you.)
8. Flesh will eventually self-destruct or fail to meet your needs. (John 6:63)

Flesh results in conflict and frustration within ourselves and our relationships, leading to pacing, distancing, and isolating to avoid emotional intimacy. Because our best fleshly efforts and energy fail, flesh makes us ANGRY, possibly explosive. Suppressed anger leads to depression.

Read and Discuss Luke 15:11-32 (*The Prodigal Sons*)

The Younger Son's Flesh	The Older Son's Flesh	The Father's Love
Withdrew physically	Withdrew emotionally	Present, available, involved
Self-Indulgent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending, carousing, gambling, passive, irresponsible, careless 	Self-Denial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obedient, pleaser, critical, nit-picking, scorecard, spiteful. 	Selfless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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!

Which brother do you most resemble?

Prayer to Renounce Fleshly Striving

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, 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 everything I need for life and godliness. Amen.

Understand Vows

Inner vows are protective promises we create in response to painful experiences, messages, situations, or individuals. Their purpose is to shield us from future rejection or to prevent repeating the mistakes of others. Often, these inner vows fade from our conscious awareness, yet our will remains vigilant and resistant to letting go.

The issue with vows is their reliance on our strength rather than Christ's healing love and protective truth. Vows do not prevent pain; they bind us to positive flesh patterns and hinder the Spirit. Christ will not override your free will but invites you to relinquish your vows.

- Vow example: "I will never be like my mom or dad." "I will never spank my children or drink."

Prayer to Renounce Vows

Father God,

I confess (state vow) is a self-protective vow. This promise has failed to keep me safe or earn acceptance and love. I renounce this vow. I ask You to nullify this vow and heal my heart. Thank You for taking the pain unto Yourself and renewing my mind, will, and emotions by the Holy Spirit. I entrust myself into Your keeping. Amen.