

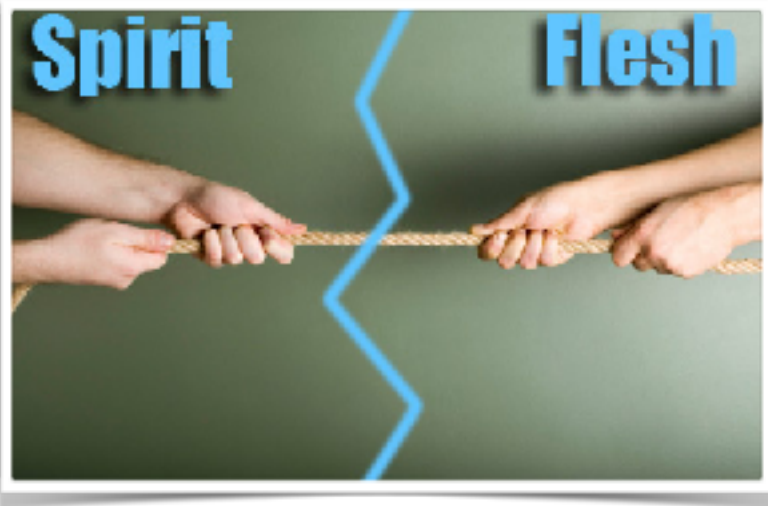
CARNAL CHRISTIANS

1 Corinthians 3:1-6

It is hard to discern whether a person is a genuine Christian when their lives are characterized as one driven by their base instincts, ruled by their passions, given over to their appetites and sensual desires? Are they Christians lured away by their carnal desires, or are they lost? Certainly, they are worldly in their actions.

The church has often thought of worldliness only in terms of night clubbing, drinking, drugs and the like. But worldliness is much deeper than bad habits; it is an orientation, a way of thinking and behaving. Basically, it is buying into the world's philosophies, buying into human wisdom. It is looking to the world, to human leaders, to influential and popular people, to neighbors, to associates, and fellow students, to determine **their standards, attitudes, and meaning.**

WORLDLINESS IS ACCEPTING THE WORLD'S DEFINITIONS, THE WORLD'S MEASURING STICKS, THE WORLD'S GOALS. AND IT IS OUR FLESH THAT PRODUCES THE BRIDGE THE WORLD USES TO REACH US.



The moment a person is born again, they are given a new nature, but our flesh is not removed. That will not occur until we are glorified. Until then the flesh continually resists and opposes the heart.

It is the flesh with which the world and its philosophies usually connect. The world entices our senses, our appetites, our sensual desires in order to drag us away from the things of God.

Carnality defined:

The term "carnal" is found in 1 Cor. 3:1.

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ."

It is a very descriptive word and is translated from the Greek word σαρκικοί which means, "pertaining to the flesh." It refers to one

driven by their own base instincts absent of any moral virtue.

God created man in His own image and in him alone He breathed the breath of life. By God's own design, humanity is distinct from the animal kingdom. With this distinction comes the ability to reason, make moral choices, and experience guilt.

Animals on the other hand operate primarily on instinct. Pigs have the instinct to keep moist and cool so they gravitate to mud. Frogs have an instinct to find water. When intruders come, their instincts tells them to hide.

Dogs, as wonderful and intelligent as they might seem, are still animals driven primarily by instinct. They are void of moral discernment. Shave a dog and he might not like it. He might get cold, but they have no moral sense of nakedness and shame. Teach a

dog to hunt and kill its prey. They will kill, but there is no sense of remorse over killing.

Even Scripture says, "The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 3:22).

FROM THE ANIMAL WORLD COMES THE TERM "FLESHLY." ONE DRIVEN BY THEIR OWN BASE INSTINCTS ABSENT OF ANY MORAL VIRTUE.

In our lessons context, we will examine how the term carnality is used to describe Christians who have reverted to their old fleshly nature. We will discover the problems carnality brings and demonstrate how it hinders spiritual growth, promotes infantile behavior and ultimately causes one to miss God's blessing. We will end by exploring various ways we can avoid becoming like the Corinthians, — carnal.

1. Review the following passages and discuss what Paul means when he calls some people spiritual, natural or carnal — 1 Corinthians 2: 14, 15; 3:1, 2; Romans 8:7.

ANSWER:

- a. The first group involves those who are natural or sensual. They are unsaved men oriented to the physical realms (1 Cor. 2:14).
- b. The second group mentioned are those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:15). He is one who is saved and yields his life to God. He by the Holy Spirit's guidance can understand spiritual things because he has a new nature and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- c. The third group of people the apostle refers to are those who are carnal (1 Cor. 3:1; Rom. 8:7). They are saved men who have reverted back to their old ways. They tend to rely on their fleshly instincts rather than the Spirit. The results of this is the emergence of an undesirable hybrid, saved men acting like the lost. Their sinful conduct stunts their spiritual growth, limits their understanding of spiritual things, and hinders their fellowship with God and others.

2. Look up the following verses and discuss the problem carnality causes. How does someone know they are saved? How long can a Christian remain in a carnal state?

ANSWER:

These are reasonable questions because if Jesus saved us, it would be logical to assume that Jesus would assure us of this fact. Scripture confirms this in 1 John 5:13 where it says,

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

A. According to the following verses, how is someone saved?

1. Romans 10:13
2. Romans 10:9-10
3. John 3:16

B. What are some of the characteristics of the Christian's new nature?

2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:2-3, 5,10; 4:17, 20-21; 5:1-7

If we are saved, we therefore have a new nature and we will demonstrate this with new desires and a righteous life style.

C. Below, are a few more characteristics manifested by true believers

1. They will keep on believing _____ – 1 John 2:23
2. They will not continually practice _____ sin _____ – 1 John 3:6-7 & 9
3. They will desire to keep God's commandments _____ (this is more than just the ten commandments.)
 - a. 1 John 3:24
 - b. 1 John 2:3-4
 - c. 1 John 3:23
5. They will love _____ the brethren – 1 John 4:20-21
6. They will not forsake _____ the assembly _____ of believers
 - a. 1 John 2:19.
 - b. Hebrews 10:23, 25

3. What are the scriptural proofs that a genuine Christian will be kept saved?

- A. Jesus promised to keep _____ us. (John 17:12, 15, 20; John 10:27-30)
- B. We are kept _____ by His power. (1 Peter 1:5)

- C. He promises to work _____ in us to keep us saved until we are taken home to be with Him (Phil. 1:6; 2:13)
- D. He continually _____ intercedes _____ for us before the Father in order to keep us saved, even when we stumble (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 5:10).

4. What happens when a Christian sins?

- a. They lose _____ fellowship with God _____ but not their eternal salvation.

1) 1 John 1:6-7, 9

2) 1 Corinthians 5:1, 4, 5

Proof of this is seen in a man who was living in sin; here he lost fellowship with God and received punishment, but he did not lose his eternal life. Note the word in verse 5 “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

- b. We receive discipline _____ and correction _____ from the Lord. His intent is to restore _____ us back into fellowship with Him – Hebrews 12:5-8.

5. Discuss what happened to the carnal Christians at Corinth. — 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.

In what ways did their carnality manifest itself? — 1 Corinthians 3:3-4; 5:1; 6:1.

How does carnal conduct affect the church, the home, the workplace and the community?

ANSWER:

1. Their spiritual growth was hindered – 1 Cor. 3:1 – “Babes”
2. They had a hard time grasping spiritual truths – 1 Cor. 3:1 – “not able to bear it.”

6. Based on the above passages, what dilemma does long-term Christian carnality pose?

7. What is God’s solution for overcoming carnality? - 1 John 1:9; Romans 12:1-2, Matthew 5:23-24; James 5:16; Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 19:8.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Matt. 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Matt. 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Luke 19:8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.