

Sharing Our Stories...

The Christian life isn't struggle-free. Yet most followers of Christ are unprepared for the inner struggles they will experience.

- Since becoming a follower of Christ, to what degree have you experienced an inner struggle over conflicting desires? (wanting to please yourself versus wanting to please Christ)

Reflecting on our Struggles...

"Discussion Questions"

- Why do you think most followers of Christ are unprepared for these inner struggles?
- How does it feel to be faced with a significant challenge that you are not prepared for?

For example, how would you feel if you were enrolled in an upper level language course for a language in which you had never learned the basics?

In a similar way, we must master the basics of the Christian life to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.



Think About it

Anyone can experience an inner struggle over conflicting desires to do what is right and wrong. But the follower of Christ will often experience this struggle more intensely. It is not simply a matter of obeying our conscience or some rule. It involves our genuine desire to please our new Master which conflicts with the old ways we pleased ourselves. It can also involve a conflict between our desire to experience the life God wants to give us and the desire to live life our own way. The good news is that experiencing these struggles is evidence of a genuine change in our lives as a result of our new relationship with Christ

Exploring the Solution

Paul wrote this letter to a group of believers who were also facing this struggle. They were being told by others that the solution was to try harder at doing what was right by following the Law – the written commandments explaining what is right and wrong. But Paul wanted them to realize they did not have the power in themselves to do what was right or follow the Law. Neither do we.

The Conflict (5:16-18)

Who are the opponents? _____

The word flesh is used for sinful nature in some translations. When used in this way, it does not refer to the physical aspect of people. Rather, it is that aspect within people which leads them to live independent of God, in opposition to Him and His ways. Compare Romans 8:5-8.

The Consequences (5:19-23)

The source of our desires will determine the nature of what is produced.

What is produced when we walk in the flesh? (5:19-21)

What is produced when we walk by the Spirit? (5:22-23)

Notice that the Spirit always leads us to do what is right, never to do what is wrong. (5:23)

Galatians 5:16-26

16So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. 19The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other to live independent of God, in opposition to Him and His ways.

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The Change (5:24-25)

According to verse 24, how has our relationship to the sinful nature changed?

Since we now live by the Spirit, what does our relationship with the Spirit look like? (5:25)

The Issue

What do I do when I fail to "Keep in step with the Spirit?"

As I grow in my relationship with God, there are two common experiences

Experience One: *Though I sincerely desire to please God, sometimes I become aware of an area of my life that is displeasing to Him, either an attitude or an action. I don't want to disobey. It's just that I am learning more about what God is like and becoming more aware of sin.*

What do I do?



I simply thank God that He has already forgiven my sins, claim His love and forgiveness by faith and trust Him for the power to change in that area. This allows me to continue enjoying fellowship with Him

Experience Two: *Suppose I choose to sin through a definite act of disobedience.*

What do I do now?



To respond rightly to my sin, I confess it to God and turn from it. I acknowledge my powerlessness to live the Christian life and ask in faith for the Spirit to fill me with His power. A simple way to remember this is by using the word picture of "spiritual breathing." Physically, we exhale impure air and inhale the pure. Spiritually, I exhale by confessing my sin (1 John 1:9) and inhale by claiming the Spirit's power (Ephesians 5:18).

What would happen if I refused to deal with my sin?

Over time, I would find myself becoming more and more worldly, like the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). But as I deal with my sin and rely upon the Spirit, I will become more spiritually mature and see the fruit of the Spirit produced within me (Galatians 5:22-23).

As you think of these 2 experiences where do you see yourself in this process?

Summary:

What the Bible explains, we can believe. What is true about you? _____

What the Bible commands, we need to do. What are we commanded to do? _____

What the Bible promises, we can expect. What can be the results in my life? _____

Taking Steps:

Four steps can help us put these truths into action:

1- Recognize the conflict. **2- Remember** the source of the conflict – the Spirit's desires versus the desires of the sinful nature.

3- Reject the desires of the sinful nature. **4- Rely** on the Spirit's power to produce His fruit in our lives.

Consider an example. Suppose a family member does something wrong to you:

Recognize the conflict between your desire to be mad and get even and the Spirit's desire to forgive and restore the relationship.

Remember the source of this inner struggle is between the sin nature and the Spirit.

Reject the desires of the sinful nature to get even.

Rely on the Spirit's power to produce genuine love and forgiveness and provide wisdom in how to respond.

Is there an area where you are currently struggling? How would you apply these steps? _____