

From flesh to spirit – a possible way to approach the carnal Christian

Sadly, the vast majority of Christians are living in their human nature or flesh and taking all of their decisions in the mind of their flesh or intellect. They do not live “in Christ” meaning they are not being led by God’s Spirit, they do not hear His voice and therefore cannot know or do His will. The Bible calls them carnal. This displeases the Father since it is not His plan of salvation at all. And it’s such a loss to Christians for they now live outside all the blessings and protections of God’s spiritual Kingdom.

For such Christians, while converted, the far more major part of our salvation, its called sanctification, is still missing. Salvation means being saved from sin, and God defines sin as being self-willed (Isaiah 53:6) in contrast to being God-willed which He calls righteousness (Rom 6:16). Sanctification involves separation from sin through a belief in Christ’s death to our self-willed human nature (Rom. 6:6), our consecration to God, and our progressive conformity to Christ’s nature, by receiving God’s words into our heart or spirit (Rom 12:1-2 Jam 1:21). Before this can begin, we Christians must be moved from our human nature to our spirit nature, since this is the only place we can receive truth from God (Pro 20:27, 1 Cor 2:14). Here is one way that we Christians can move from our Adam nature to our born again or Christ nature.

Invite the person to read from their Bible this scripture and ask for their comments:

Rom 8:14 **As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.**

Then ask the person to read from their Bible this scripture and invite their comments:

Rom 8:8 **Those who are in the flesh (living by human nature) cannot please God.**

Ask the person if they understand the difference between these two fundamentally different states of being that control the will of a Christian, and how their relationship with God is affected by each. Depending on how open the person is, the question “in which of these two states do you consider yourself to be?” may be appropriate. If there isn’t a clear understanding of what these two states, flesh or spirit, mean then the following scripture, especially the Living Bible version, provides a good answer:

Rom 8:5 TLB **Those who let themselves be controlled by their lower (human) natures live only to please themselves, but those who follow after the Holy Spirit find themselves doing those things that please God.**

Hopefully and prayerfully this may then lead to the question “what one key factor determines whether a person is in the flesh or in the spirit?” This scripture answers:

Rom 8:9 **You are not in the flesh (controlled by your human nature - TEV) but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.** - It may need to be explained here that “not belonging to Christ” does not mean “not born again” (Romans is written to Christians) but rather “not currently

belonging to Him or under His Lordship” since clearly the person without God’s Spirit is under the lordship of their own flesh and belongs to “self”.

All being well this could lead to a discussion of “well, who then has the Holy Spirit, and who therefore is not controlled by their human nature?” All the scriptures so far referenced have been from the eighth chapter of Romans now we need to go to:

Acts 5:32 (part B) ..**The Holy Spirit who is God's gift to those who obey Him.** TEV

Luke 11:13 **If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!** - it may need to be clarified that as God is already the Father of “those who ask Him” they are already born again Christians.

Clearly those who have the Holy Spirit are those who obey God and who have, in faith, received Him. A Christian may say “I know I once had the Holy Spirit although lately I’ve been living in the flesh, what happened?” This scripture gives an answer:

1 Thess 5:19 **Do not quench the Spirit.** – and what does “quench” mean?

According to Strong’s concordance it means “To extinguish, to cause to go out” – just like the five foolish virgins who ran out of oil (symbolizing the Holy Spirit) and their lamps went out (Mat. 25:8). What is the most likely cause of extinguishing the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:32 above provides the answer – continued disobedience to God’s guidance. If this has happened, how can the Holy Spirit be restored? Assuming forgiveness from God has been received, and there is now a willingness to fully obey Him, then Luke 11:13 above indicates all that remains is to ask the Father, and to believe that His Holy Spirit is received. If there is genuine humility, it will happen.

Gal 3:2 AMP...**Do you receive the Holy Spirit as the result of obeying the Law or by hearing the message of the Gospel (God’s promise to give it) and believing it?**

A related approach to a carnal Christian – many of whom live under continuous condemnation, guilt and shame – is to invite them to read the following scripture:

Rom 8:1 (Amp. Version) **Therefore, there is now no condemnation, no judging guilty of wrong, for those who are in Christ Jesus, (that is) who live and walk not after the dictates of the flesh, but after the dictates of the Spirit.**

This makes clear that the only freedom for a Christian from condemnation, guilt and shame is to be “in Christ”, that is, living in the Spirit and not in the flesh. This leads directly back to the question of “what one factor determines whether a person is in the flesh or in the Spirit?” Romans 8:9 on page one gives the answer, the Holy Spirit – this could then lead to a discussion of who has the Holy Spirit, as outlined above.