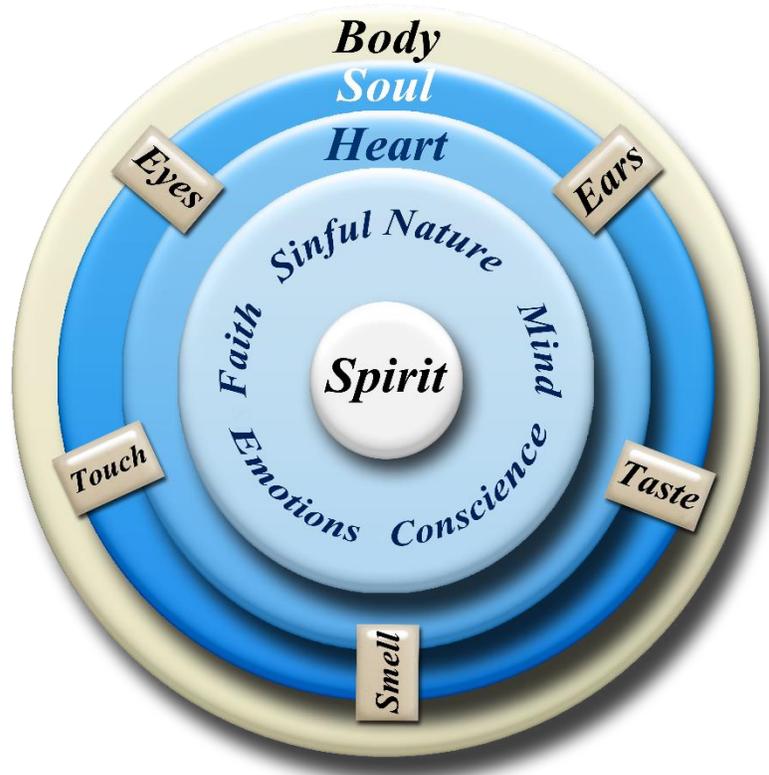


Body, Soul, Heart and Spirit



Victory Over the Flesh

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Introduction

There are different aspects to our being that we know exist; but are difficult to understand and explain. For example, we know we have a body; we have a mind; we have emotions; and we have a free will. However, there is more to our makeup, much more. There are components of our being that have a significant influence as to who we are, how we interface with the world around us—and most important—influences our relationship with God.

Scripture provides us with insight into these mysterious “internal” components of our design.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of **soul and spirit**, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the **heart**.” Hebrews 4:12

We are comprised of a body, soul and spirit. However, Hebrews 4:12 mentions a fourth component: our heart. As such, this Bible study describes the function and interrelationship of all four components—with an emphasis on the importance of the heart.

As we explore the Bible, we will find there are specific references to the unique and wondrous functions of our heart (our spiritual heart and not our physical heart which pumps blood throughout our body). Our spiritual heart is integrated with (and part of) our soul. In addition, we will discover how the thoughts and intents of our heart directly influences who we are, what we do and what we say. But what is eternally important to know and understand, our heart is looked upon, weighed, and searched by God.

“For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.” Proverbs 21:2

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind.” Jeremiah 17:9-10

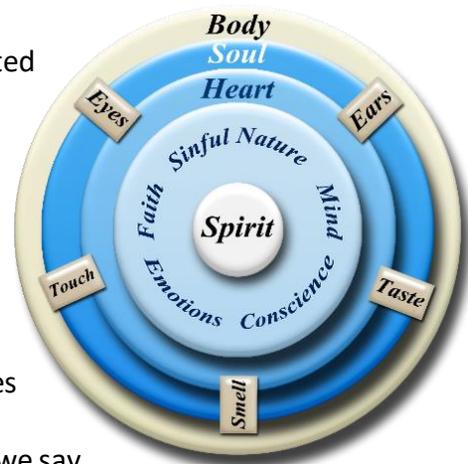
“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

Jesus said, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**” Matthew 22:37

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24.

Spiritual Body and Physical Body

This page provides an introductory overview. Each bulleted point is explained in greater detail.



Our **spiritual** body includes our soul and spirit.

- Our soul and spirit are separate, yet integrated as one.
- Our Soul has the following components:
 - **Heart:**
 - Where deepest thoughts, intents, and desires reside.
 - May or may not influence what we do and what we say.
 - **Faith:** God gives each person a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)
 - **Sinful Nature:** We are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)
 - **Mind:**
 - Uses our physical brain to function: walk, speak, look, touch, do things, etc.
 - Includes our intellect, memory, and imagination.
 - Where sinful thoughts occur.
 - **Conscience:** An innate sense of knowing right from wrong.
 - **Emotions:** Fear, anger, joy, sadness, shame, etc.
- Spirit
 - We are all born with a spirit. Due to our sinful nature our spirit is not vibrant/influential.
 - Those who are born-again receive a new God-given spirit which provides us with:
 - Spiritual understanding and knowledge. (1 Corinthians 2:12-14)
 - Spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12)
 - Communion with God. (John 4:24)

Our **physical** body:

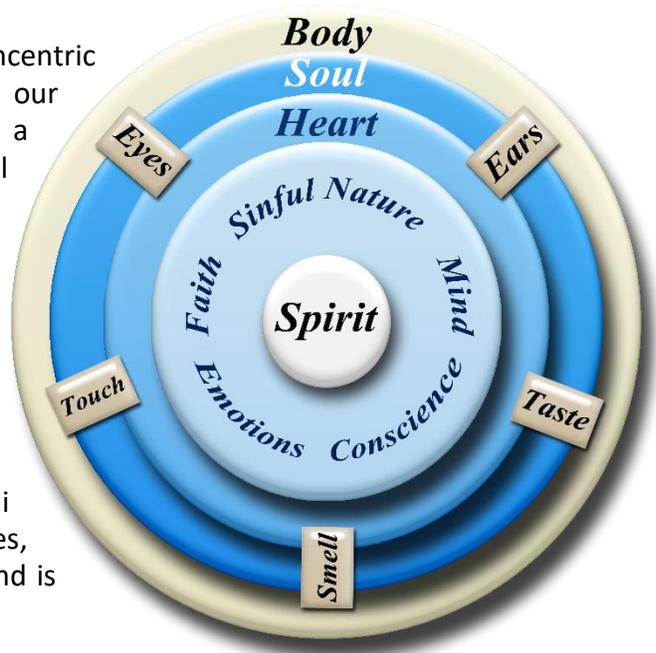
- Is comprised of our flesh, bones, organs, and so forth.
- Communicates with our soul and spirit:
 - Via five different senses (or means) for external stimuli to enter into our spiritual body:
 - Sight (Eyes)
 - Hearing (Ears)
 - Touch
 - Smell
 - Taste
 - Via our nervous system when there is a “need for attention/fulfillment” such as:
 - Pain
 - Hunger
 - Sexual drive
 - Chemical addiction (alcohol, drugs, etc.)

One of my favorite candy bars is Snickers; which when you think about it is similar to our body, soul, heart and spirit. For example, the wrapper represents our physical body—or our “packaging”—which is the least important part of the candy bar and is eventually thrown away. The candy bar represents our spiritual body: soul and spirit. The outside chocolate layer represents our heart (which wraps around the caramel-covered nuts and nougat). The caramel-covered nuts represent our faith, sinful nature, mind, conscience and emotions. The nougat represents our spirit.

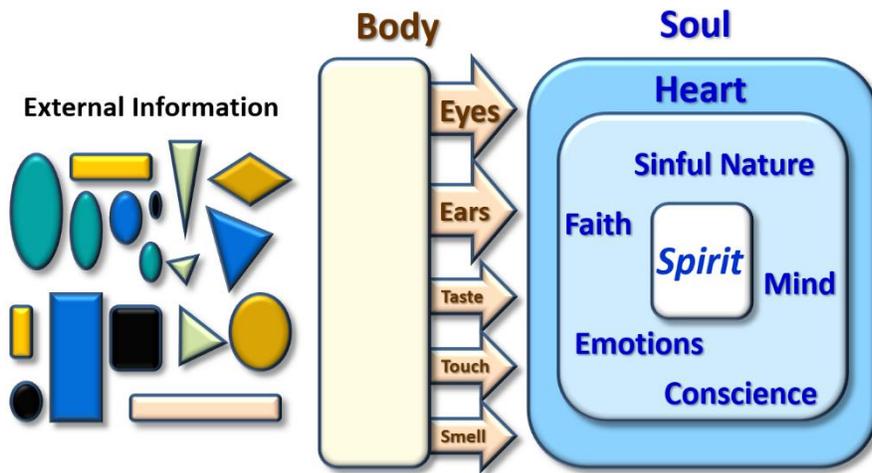


The graphic to the right also depicts (via concentric rings) our body, soul and spirit. Note how our physical senses (eyes, ears, etc.) provide a “communication link” between our physical body and our spiritual body. For example, what we watch and hear (sinful vs. moral content) has a direct effect upon our spiritual body—which can affect our physical body.

Ever wonder why you sometimes have a sinful thought or an urge to sin (even after you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord)? Well, it was either instigated by external stimuli that entered into one or more of your senses, and/or demonically initiated. How you respond is determined by the desires of your heart.



Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21



This graphic depicts the same components shown in the concentric ring example above. Moving from left to right, the graphic represents how external information enters into our spiritual body via one or more of our physical senses. External information—in all its various forms—is represented by the

different shapes and colors. Some are valuable for spiritual growth, others are not, and some are detrimental. In addition, our eyes play a larger role of transferring external information into our spiritual body than our ears—and our ears transfers more information than our other senses—which is reflected by the larger fonts and arrows. As such, our eyes and ears are primary pathways for the light and life of God’s Word; and the same senses Satan will use to darken and destroy. Therefore, it is imperative that we selectively watch and listen to that which is beneficial to our spiritual body.

Matthew 6:22-23 describes our eyes as a means to provide light and life, or darkness and death. In other words, what we allow our eyes to look upon has a direct affect upon our spiritual body.

Jesus said, **“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”** Matthew 6:22-23

Jesus also said, **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”** Matthew 5:27-30

Jesus metaphorically used descriptive terms such as “pluck” and “cut” to emphasize the importance of doing whatever is necessary to eliminate sources of external information that may cause us to sin. He did not mean to actually pluck or cut our bodies. Besides, our bodies do not matter. What is important is our heart. For example, there are times when we need to immediately turn our eyes and walk away (remove ourselves from a situation) because an image that is entering our eyes is propagating inappropriate lustful thoughts—which is usually followed by an unwanted bodily response. The deliberate act of turning our eyes away will occur from our heart: when one’s love toward God and the desire to please Him is greater than fulfilling the desires of our flesh.

Our Spiritual Body

Our spiritual body was divinely formed and placed within our physical body at some point of time before our physical birth (while we were in the womb). No one knows when this miraculous event occurs. However, the Bible provides insight in the first chapter of Luke.

Zechariah was informed by an angel of the Lord that he and his wife, Elizabeth, will conceive and bear a son and to call him John (also known as John the Baptist). This notification by the angel occurred before Elizabeth became pregnant. What's more, the angel also said John will be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born, and he will prepare people for the arrival of Jesus Christ.

“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ He returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. Luke 1:11-17, 23-24

Mary (the mother of Jesus) was informed by the angel Gabriel that she will become pregnant by the Holy Spirit as the power of the Most High overshadows her. Her son is to be called Jesus, the Son of God.

“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.’ ‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Luke 1:26-35

In both instances, the spiritual body of John and Jesus were joined with their physical bodies prior to their birth. Here are additional scriptures that provide evidence that our physical and spiritual body are formed in the womb prior to our physical birth.

“The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’” Jeremiah 1:5

“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself.” Isaiah 44:24

“But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” Galatians 1:15-16

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:13-14

Our Soul

Our soul includes our **heart**. Our soul is where God’s apportioned **faith** dwells. Our soul is where our **sinful nature** resides. Our soul includes our **mind**. Our soul is where our **conscience** is located. Our soul is the source of our wide-array of **emotions**. And our soul and **spirit**—while separate—are mysteriously integrated as one.



Before we begin to explore each of the components of our soul, it is very important to fully comprehend the scope of the following statement. Take a moment and reflect upon the following truth.

Our soul will never die!

Our soul is spiritual, eternal, and will live forever in one of two places: in absolute bliss with our Savior and Lord in Heaven, or in indescribable agony with Satan in the lake of fire. The ultimate outcome of our free will decision regarding Jesus Christ (believe in Him—or reject Him) cannot be stated any simpler.

Believe in Jesus Christ	Reject Jesus Christ
Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” John 11:25-26	“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Revelation 20:10
Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6	“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:14

Our Heart

Our heart is deeply intertwined with—and inseparable—from our soul. As such, there are attributes and functions of our heart and soul that seem similar. However, there are many scriptures that reveal our heart functions at a “higher level” than our soul. In addition, our heart serves as an interface between the components of our soul and our spirit, and as an interface between our spiritual body and our physical body.

Listed below are comparative functions of the heart of a person who is not born-again, and the heart of a person who is born-again.

Functions of Heart	Not Born-Again	Born-Again
Coalesce (combine, unite, join) input from:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Components of the soul • Physical body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Components of the soul • Physical body • Spirit • Holy Spirit
Central collection point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts & imagination • Attitudes • Desires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts & imagination • Attitudes • Desires
Core motivation	Self	Transitions from self to God
Manages what we do and say	Possible (if yes, less control)	Yes (increases via wisdom & self-control)
Exercise apportioned faith	Possible (lacks Spirit influence)	Yes (increases via trials/tribulations)
Believe in God	Possible (lacks Spirit influence)	Yes (increases via revelation)
Trust God	Likely not	Yes (increases via trials/tribulations)
Repository of God’s Laws	Possible (if yes, less influence)	Yes (appreciative acceptance)

The following scriptures provides insight into the importance of (and functions of) our heart.

“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” Genesis 6:5-6

Jesus said, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Luke 6:45

“As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.” 1 Chronicles 28:9

“But You, O Lord, know me; You have seen me, and you have tested my heart toward You.” Jeremiah 12:3

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:9-10

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.” Proverbs 4:20-27

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

“Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” Psalm 62:8

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5

God’s Laws are Written on Our Hearts

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Hebrews 8:10

This promise from God occurs when we are born again, and is a core component of our new nature—because the only means to truly change is from within—by the One who formed us.

Hardened Heart

It is possible for the heart to be hardened toward God. In addition, if one’s heart is hardened toward God it is usually calloused toward the world. As such, a hardened heart becomes an “internal” barrier that will actively circumvent (repel, evade, thwart, stop) what the eyes see and what the ears hear; restricts spiritual awareness; and impedes reception of God’s grace.

Apart from God’s direct intervention (i.e. when He hardened the heart of Pharaoh Exodus 9:12), there are three ways a heart will harden:

1. Sin
2. Works-based faith (i.e. someone who has not accepted God’s complete and unmerited grace in Jesus Christ). An example is the Pharisees who believed salvation was based upon adherence to religious laws and works. Read all of Matthew 23.
3. Unforgiveness

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Hebrews 3:12-13

Jesus said, “For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.” Matthew 13:15

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Romans 2:5

Softening of our hearts is a life-long process that occurs as we continually walk with Him. For example, the disciples were concerned about food soon after Jesus miraculously fed the thousands.

“But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?’ They said to Him, ‘Twelve.’” Mark 8:17-19

Receiving forgiveness for our sins begins the process of softening one’s heart. Receiving forgiveness occurs when we confess our sins to God; believe in and receive His absolute and unmerited grace via His Son, Jesus Christ; turn our heart away from sin; and direct it towards God. Our heart will also soften when we forgive someone else for their transgressions against us. For if we have been forgiven, how can we hold anger and judgment toward someone else? Whatever reasons our mind devises to hold on to unforgiveness—our unforgiveness will continue to harden our heart and hinder our spiritual growth.

For more information on a hardened heart, read “God’s Grace and the Hardened Heart” on UniqueBibleStudies.com. It describes the functions, characteristics and consequences of two opposing conditions of our spiritual heart: a hardened heart vs. a broken and contrite heart. It also explains how God’s grace has a transformational influence on a hardened heart.



Faith

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Romans 12:3

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

God apportioned faith within each of our souls. A very simple and basic definition of faith is our capability of believing that something exists—even if we cannot see, hear, touch, smell, or taste it. Think about it, if we were not designed with the attribute of faith...we would be incapable of believing in God. Plus, when you think more about it, we need the basic attribute of faith when we interact with the world around us. For example (although it’s unnoticeable) different aspects of our faith are exercised when we:

- Sit down in a chair.
- Depend upon someone else to do something.
- Press the “send” button on an e-mail (we have a degree of faith in the Internet in that it will correctly deliver the message to the intended destination).

This apportioned attribute within our soul—faith—can magnify and transition within our heart into belief. But what is most important: belief can grow into trust.



“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 1:13

Trust is defined as a firm belief in the integrity, ability, or character of a person. However, it’s more—much more. Trust is beyond faith. Trust is beyond belief. Trust involves extending an indescribable “internal part” of us to the object of our trust. Trust is the highest personal attribute one can give, and one can earn. However, trust is also extremely fragile. When trust is broken it “hurts” on the inside as we deal with our emotions. What’s more, once trust is broken it will never achieve the same degree once extended/received.

God desires our whole-hearted trust. However, each and every one of us will encounter events in our lives that will challenge our faith, belief, and trust in God. It is inevitable. Reasons why may never be understood until we are with Him in Heaven. At a young age of 38, my father died of lung cancer when I was 15-years old. And as long as I live on this earth I will never understand why. But deep in my heart I am confident I will know why when I see him again.

Sinful Nature

If you ask a diverse group of people to define the word “sin” you’d likely receive varying responses that range across an entire spectrum. For example, there are some that believe that there’s no such thing as sin. Others may define sin as behavior, such as murder, theft, sexual immorality, and so forth. Some may define sin as knowing what should be done, and not doing it (James 4:17). While others may define sin based upon thoughts.

Sin		
Does not exist	Behavior	Thoughts

God gave us the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5) as a “minimal benchmark” or “standard” as means to reveal our sin. But more important, He gave us the Ten Commandments because of His love for us. (Unfortunately, many fail to understand this and view them as a list of do’s and don’ts.) When you think about it, they are a list of logical, relevant and prudent behaviors that seem fairly easy to obey. However, every one of us has broken one or more. The reason: we are all born with a sinful nature—which has been passed down through the generations—starting with Adam and Eve. As an example, consider how a toddler (when confronted with something they have knowingly done wrong) will lie and/or blame others, and will continue to do so even when presented with the absolute truth (just like Adam and Eve). Read Genesis 2:15-25; 3:1-13

Additional info on sin and our sinful nature is provided in the writing “3 Types of Death, 1 Source of Life,” “Foundation” and “6 Stages of Temptation” on: <http://www.UniqueBibleStudies.com/>.

Mind

The mind of our soul includes our intellect, memory and imagination. In addition, the mind generates “base” thoughts—including real and imaginary mental images. Due to our sinful flesh, these thoughts and mental images may not align with God’s will. Based upon the intent and desires of the heart, the heart will either manage these thoughts (approve/disapprove, reposition/redirect, or bring to an end), or will simply let them “pass through” for immediate verbal expression and/or behavior without regard to consequences.

For example, think back to a situation when you were wronged or disrespected and you wanted to “unload” on the responsible person. Thoughts and images of what you wanted to say/do raced through your mind as your body’s stress and tension levels rapidly increased. However, you knew (via your conscience) what you were considering was wrong. So, you “bit your tongue” and did not speak “your mind.” The fact that you “bit your tongue” and did not speak means your heart was in control. Your heart disapproved of what you were about to say/do and actively managed your response via a heart-directed consideration of (1) the negative consequences that may occur by allowing the mind and emotions to take control; and/or (2) the potential positive outcomes of a Spirit-led loving response. The heart of a born-again Christian (based upon

spiritual maturity) will seek to turn this situation from an attempt of self-preservation and vain retribution, to a glorification of God.

Spiritual Mind vs. Physical Brain

The physical brain is a “tool” (or “instrument”) that is actively used by the soul, heart and spirit to interface with the physical world. The following will help explain this point.



Consider how a musician (i.e. our soul, heart and spirit) will use a piano (i.e. our brain) as a tool to make music. Both the musician and the piano work in unison to create wonderful sound.

Now consider the effect on the music if functional changes are made to the piano, including changing the tone of various keys and disconnecting others. While no change has been to the musician, the musician is unable to perform as intended, and the discordant sound may be caustic to our ears.

Likewise, when we introduce a drug into our brain it is akin to making changes to the piano. Like the musician, our spiritual body is not affected by the drug. However, our soul, heart and spirit are not able to function as designed. A concerted but vain effort to gain control (over our physical body) may occur as discordant words and behavior are exhibited. Meanwhile, the negative consequences of a drug will often weaken a resolute heart—thereby increasing the influence of our sinful desires.

Conscience

We are designed with a conscience. Our conscience provides us with an inner sense of right versus wrong. A person’s “benchmarks” of what is considered right versus what is considered wrong may be based upon behavior, thoughts, motives, outcomes, etc. What’s more, when we break our own personal standards (especially God’s standards) we will usually attempt to justify our sinful behavior via flawed human rationalization.

- I know it’s against God’s law to steal; however, it’s ok to cheat on taxes because the government gets too much of my money anyway.
- I know it’s against God’s law to lie; however, it was only just a little “white lie.” Besides, no one got hurt.
- I know I should perform the job to meet the required standards; but due to a competitive bid process there’s insufficient profit. So, I’ll cut corners.

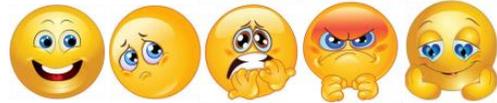
Our conscience is comprised of ethical and moral principles that controls (or inhibits) what we say and do. What’s more, those who are born again will find the focus of the conscience transitions from external behavior to the thoughts and motives of the heart.

Emotions

An emotion is commonly defined as a feeling of joy, sorrow, fear, anger, love, and so forth. An emotion can range from a subliminal and unnoticeable influence, to a strong feeling, and to an overwhelming force. In addition, an emotion can arise without warning and forethought, and can cause one to behave in a way that has not been checked (and approved) by the heart. As such (and unfortunately) there are times when our emotions completely take over our thoughts and behavior, resulting in regrettable behavior. In addition, emotions can provide an opportunity for Satan to lead one astray, especially negative emotions.

A writing on emotions is available on UniqueBibleStudies.com. The content includes:

- The different emotions we experience.
- How facial indicators can provide insight into emotions.
- How Satan can use emotions to lead one astray.
- Techniques to minimize anger, fear, and anxiety.
- Benefits of Godly fear.
- How to overcome demonic fear.
- Differences between sadness and depression.
- How our emotions and God's emotions are similar.



Our Spirit

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” John 3:3-6

Not Born Again

From a spiritual perspective, this graphic depicts the soul of one who is not born again:

- The heart may be hardened.
- The heart lacks the desire to actively filter/manage sin.
- Are unconsciously driven by their sinful nature.
- Are unashamed and unremorseful for sin.
- Faith and conscience atrophies (withers away).
- They must rely upon delusional concepts to justify behavior.
- They are focused upon things of the world.
- Seeks to fill inner voids/repress inner turmoil by various means.
- Their spirit is virtually non-existent.
- They lack communion with God.



“Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Ephesians 4:18

Born Again

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13-14

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” Ezekiel 36:26-27

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

The moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord we are completely and forever forgiven for our sin (past, present and future). This is when we are born again—born from above as God gives us a new spirit: one that’s alive; one that connects with Him; and one that will change us from within. In addition, our heart will continually become “softer” and regenerated as we grow in grace and unmerited forgiveness. However, a born-again Christian still has a sinful nature. But praise God in that the new God-given spirit (in collaboration with The Holy Spirit) will begin the process of changing the intent, objectives, and role of the heart in controlling the sinful nature—while continually cleansing our soul of impurities



The Holy Spirit is God’s Mark (Seal) of Ownership

When we purchase an expensive item (home, car, etc.) we are usually required to make a deposit (pay for a portion of the total purchase). The deposit represents the buyer’s earnest desire to take ownership and commitment to pay in full. In a similar manner, for each that is born again, God provides the Holy Spirit, which represents:

- An earnest deposit (or portion) of our future inheritance.
- His mark of ownership (for we were already purchased—paid in full—by the blood of the Lamb)

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

“Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”
Colossians 1:12-14

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”
Romans 8:14-16

God’s Truths

Our new God-given spirit enables us to view scripture from a completely different perspective as we discover God’s word speaking directly to our heart. The Holy Spirit will disclose (expose to view, uncover) that what has been hidden from those who are not born again. This is why the unsaved does not see—nor understands—God’s word; including the role, purpose, and deity of Jesus Christ. Human understanding of the Bible is defined by the god of this world (Satan); is hampered by sin; and constrained by flawed reasoning that is based upon the physical, while being oblivious to the spiritual realm. Simply stated, understanding and revelation comes only by the Holy Spirit and not by human effort and intellect.

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

“What is a Born-Again Christian” is available on UniqueBibleStudies.com. The content explains why we cannot earn our way to Heaven; expands biblical understanding of what it means to be born again; facilitates self-evaluation; and enhances spiritual growth and maturity in Christ.



Note: All Bible studies on UniqueBibleStudies.com may be read and downloaded for free.

Our Flesh

There are many scriptures that refer to our flesh, most with a negative association with sin. Based upon our four basic components, it is this writer's opinion our flesh is comprised of the physical body and soul (and not the spirit). Whether or not the sinful demands of the flesh are fulfilled is dependent upon the desires of the heart.

In addition, a born-again Christian's new spirit (in collaboration with the Holy Spirit) will be at "odds" against the sinful flesh.

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." Galatians 5:16-17

The Apostle Paul reflected upon this struggle – which he referred to (in 2 Cor. 12:7) as a "thorn in my flesh." "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." Romans 7:15-20

Excluding demonic influence, our physical body and our soul are primarily responsible (i.e. the "culprits") for the struggle with the Spirit. The mediator between the flesh and the Spirit is the heart. For example, our physical body can exert strong and inappropriate cravings (especially when someone is addicted). Our soul will instigate improper thoughts and desires. And sometimes our body and soul will cooperatively work together in an attempt to lead us down the dark hole of sin and shame. Meanwhile, the heart will do one of the following when the body/soul is at odds with the Spirit:

- Allow the cravings of our body and/or sinful desires of the soul to take control.
- Take charge, actively deny, and overcome by obeying the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Note the optional responses for the heart is a free will decision. If sin occurs, it is because of a decision by the heart. Sin does not occur because we are forced into a sinning by a person holding a gun to our head telling us to sin or be shot, or completely overwhelming. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

Remember the following when you are confronted with sin.

1. Your temptation will not be greater than what you are able to overcome.
2. A way of escape will be provided.
3. This is when the flesh dies (and the Spirit of God is magnified) in victory.

The plain and simple truth is we sin because we decide to sin—as our heart steps aside and allows our body/soul take charge. When we fail—even for the same thing we have done before—we are still forgiven. Jesus revealed the heart of God when He answered Peter’s question about forgiveness. “Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” Matthew 18:21-22

Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother when they sin against him. You’d think seven times would be sufficient. After someone sins against us seven times, to forgive them seven times should be sufficient, and we’ve accomplished “our part.” We should be “good-to-go” and able to check this off our “to do list.” Compared to worldly standards, forgiving someone seven times far exceeds human expectations and we should be “legally free” to be done with them. What’s more, we should be able to rightfully hold onto non-forgiveness from that point forward. Besides, most persons would not forgive more than one time—which is reflected in the adage: “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.”

But Jesus said no. Jesus said we should forgive seventy times seven, or 490 times. This is a huge quantity! No one in their right mind would continue to forgive someone this many times! However, these words of Jesus reveal more than the number of times we should forgive—they reveal God’s heart. Jesus would have never asked us to do something that He is not willing to do. The response by Jesus conveys the number of times God will forgive us—which extends beyond 490 times and beyond human comprehension—because His love and forgiveness is infinite.

We will never be perfect. We will make mistakes. God understands. This is why Jesus Christ died for us. It is His love and unmerited grace that creates a deep desire within our heart to no longer sin; and seek to become more like Him in every aspect of our lives.

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

As we come to our senses, we will pray the following from our heart:

- Forgive me God.
- I made the decision to sin.
- I am responsible.
- I know what I’ve done is detrimental to me and others.
- Thank you, God, for my feelings of pain and shame, and for loving me.
- Thank you, Holy Spirit, for your guidance and truth.
- Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me, for who I am, and for what I have done.
- Help me Holy Spirit to listen and follow your lead when I confront this temptation again.

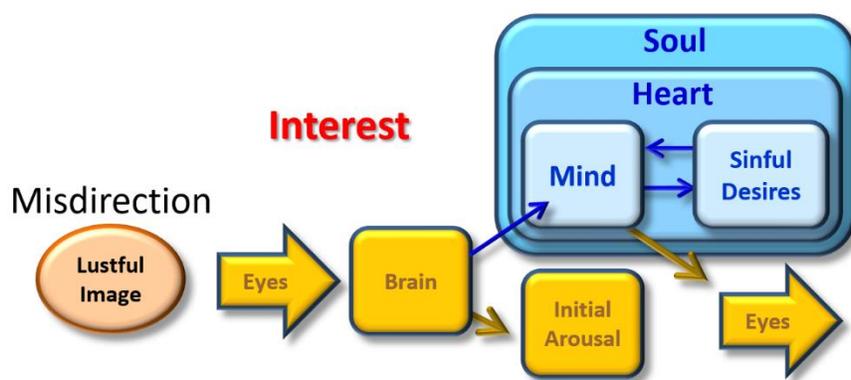
“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22-23

Lust of the Flesh

Lust of the flesh may be defined as any desire that is contrary to the will of God. Examples include gluttony, greed, envy, pride, and addictions (drugs, alcohol, sex, porn, etc.).

Jesus Christ declared adultery (one of the 10 Commandments) is not just a physical act—it may also occur in the heart. His words reveal sin on a whole different level by illuminating the nature and workings of our flesh. Jesus said **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”** Matthew 5:27-28

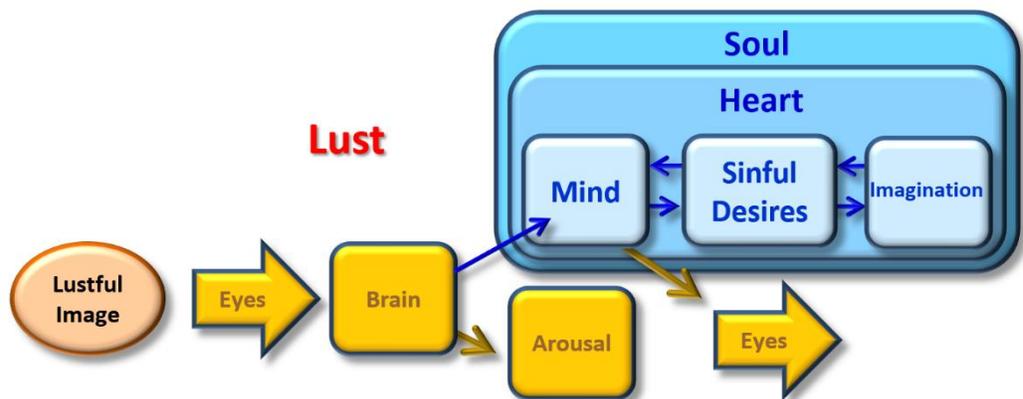
These two graphics below depicts how lust and adultery occur in the heart.



Starting from left to right. The first stage is misdirection. This is when a lustful image is seen by the eyes which cause us to mentally “disengage” from whatever we were doing. The next stage is interest. This occurs when the image is forwarded to the brain and the mind. The mind

determines it is pleasing to look at, it aligns with sinful desires and additional information is desired. The mind instructs the eyes to look at different aspects of the image. Meanwhile, an “automatic” and almost uncontrollable physical arousal may occur via the brain as the mind evaluates the image. The heart sees nothing wrong with what’s going on and does not attempt to stop it.

Additional information enters into the eyes and is forwarded to the brain and mind. As the mind continues to evaluate the images, imagination begins to create mental scenarios of desired sexual behavior. Meanwhile, physical sexual arousal increases. The heart approves what’s going on; the sinful flesh is in control; lust dominates the physical and spiritual body; and adultery is occurring.



God's Chastisement = Love

When a person is born again, God (via the Holy Spirit) "implants" within our physical body a new spirit with a new nature. Over time the Holy Spirit (in conjunction with our new spirit) will guide, instruct, and reward obedience. In addition, He will also correct via chastisement for disobedience. For example, when a born-again believer sins they will experience the following within their heart:

- *Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross for me... FOR WHAT I JUST DID!*
- *Yes, I'm forgiven, but this feeling of guilt and shame hurts deep on the inside.*
- *God's presence is gone and I don't like how I feel.*



However, thank and praise God for the feelings of guilt, shame, unworthiness, loss of internal peace, and darkness—including the feeling of being disconnected from God as we seek to run and hide from Him (i.e. the behavior of Adam and Eve after they sinned).

We have a heavenly Father who loves us. These feelings and experience are His means to spiritually chastise, correct, and cleanse our heart and soul. All of this represents—and reinforces—we are His adopted children.

Consider the following: did you think and feel this way when you sinned before you were reborn?

"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:4-11

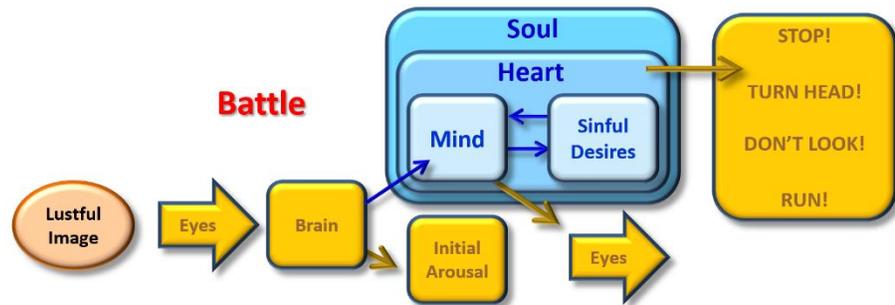
Those who have a heart that yearns for righteousness will willingly pray: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalms 139:23-24

How to Win the Battle

Here are revealing truths about our sin:

1. When we sin...it is our choice.
2. No one is responsible...but ourselves.
3. Our sin will continue...until our heart makes the following decisions:
 - I no longer want to be bound by sin.
 - I want to live a life that reflects God's grace and love.
 - I will plan and prepare how I will respond in the future when tempted.
 - I will take a proactive role by continually avoiding all that "feeds" my flesh.
 - I will identify and store God's word in my heart that speaks to the sin.
 - I will monitor "keep an eye on" the status of my flesh.
 - I will avoid those areas in my life that lead to sin.
 - I will listen to the Holy Spirit when tempted.
 - I will obediently follow the way of escape.

When a proactively-prepared born-again Christian encounters temptation, the heart will recognize what is occurring and will actively take control before arousal and imagination takes over



the flesh. This is the vital part of a Christian's new nature and a resolute heart. This is also where the "rubber meets the road"; where victory is achieved; and where the chains of sin are broken. A determined heart will:

1. Authoritatively declare: "Stop what you are doing! This is wrong! You know if you continue to look you will sin, and you will experience all of the negative consequences! Turn your head now and look no more. **DO IT NOW!!!**"
2. Deliberately remember the spiritual consequences from past sin; including the separation from God, guilt, shame, darkness, doubt, emotional distress, and collateral damage.
3. Seek assistance from God in prayer.
4. Speak the word of God prepared in their heart for this situation:
 - "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" Job 31:1
 - "Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5
 - "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2:22
5. Obediently follow the means of escape given by the Holy Spirit.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

Feed the Spirit, Starve the Flesh

As a Christian matures, they will actively seek ways to feed their spirit and starve their flesh.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Romans 8:5-6

Feeding the spirit magnifies the relationship with Jesus Christ via prayer, reading God’s word, attending church, and socializing with like-minded committed Christians.

“Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

“Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16

Starving the flesh involves a deliberate avoidance of the snares and traps that result in sin.

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” Romans 13:14

“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:8-10

“Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Ephesians 2:3-5

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:24

Are We Tempted By Our Flesh, Or Satan, Or God?

Let's start with God...Who does not tempt. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." James 1:13-14

Satan is referred to in the Bible as the "god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4); and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2); "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; John 14:30); and "the abomination that causes desolation" (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15).

Satan's position in the world was also revealed when he tempted Jesus. "Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.'" Matthew 4:8-9

It is important to understand that God is still sovereign. God has limited Satan's power and influence throughout time. However, Satan's power will be increasingly unleashed during the last days.

To gain an understanding of Satan's influence, first consider the sin in the world that (1) is addictive, (2) destroys lives, and (3) separates us from God (drugs, alcohol, and porn). Now think about the past failed attempts of government to outlaw (or at least control) each one. Now consider how drugs and porn have increased in availability and accessibility during the past few years. Those addicted to porn once had to drive to a store to fulfill their sinful flesh. Now it's just a click away in the home. Also consider the number of states that have recently legalized marijuana—including those states that are in the process of seeking legalization.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:13-14

"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." 1 John 5:18-19

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." Ephesians 2:1-3

As such, when you consider things from a very high level (and spiritual) perspective, Satan has continually improved access to things our sinful flesh desires—things that destroy and desolates. Take a serious look at what's in television and movies today and ask the following question: Does it represent the life and light of God; or does it convey messaging that speaks to our sinful flesh? What's more, compare what's depicted in television and movies today versus a few years ago. Then ask yourself...is it getting worse?

So, although indirect, it may be said that we are tempted by Satan when we see or hear something (via the media: Internet, television, movies, print, radio, and so forth) that stimulates our sinful flesh.

However, it is also possible for a Christian to be tempted directly by Satan or a demonic entity—especially if a repetitive sin is occurring. Please note it is impossible for a demon to possess a born-again Christian. However, a demon can tempt and oppress, which may include:

- Feeling as if you are being pulled/pressured into sin.
- Hearing voices and/or having negative, persuasive, or commanding thoughts to sin.
- An overwhelming feeling of oppression/depression.
- A heightened emotional experience of anxiety or fear.
- A desire for isolation.
- Finding it difficult to pray.
- A lack of desire (possible repulsion) of going to church/spending time with Christians.

If the aforementioned is occurring, every born-again Christian has the authority and power to take spiritual control over darkness by:

1. Confessing their sin to God.
2. Using the power given by the Holy Spirit and by the Blood of the Lamb.
3. Exiting the situation via the direction provided by the Holy Spirit.

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

“And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’” Luke 10:18-20

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Prayer for Satan / Demonic Attack

Heavenly Father, in name of Jesus Christ, I approach Your throne of grace and ask for your forgiveness and help. I confess and repent of my sin. (Be specific and speak from your heart!)

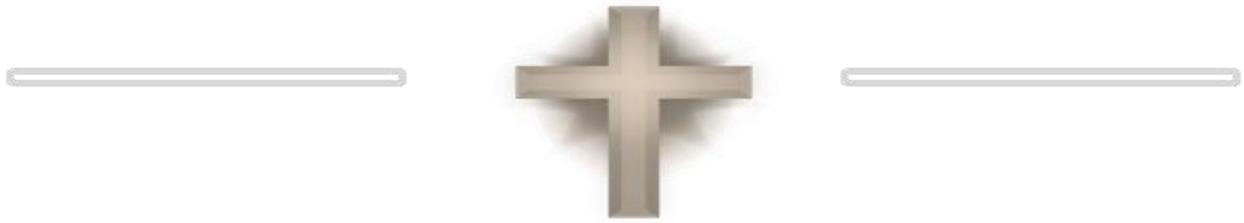
Thank you, Jesus, my Savior and Lord for dying for me. Because of your blood that was shed upon Calvary I am redeemed, justified, cleansed, and sanctified. With all of my heart, with all of my soul, with all of my mind, and with all of my strength I place my trust wholly in You Lord, in your grace and love.

Lord, protect me and deliver me from every evil spirit and evil influence that is afflicting my life. I humbly ask and seek your presence. I ask for the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit, and for angelic hosts to help in this matter.

I plead the blood of Jesus Christ over my life to protect me from the evil one, and I claim the power of the Holy Spirit over all of the kingdom of darkness, for greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world.

Satan, you and your minions have no authority in my life! I break the power and stronghold of every principality, rulers of darkness, spiritual forces of evil, and all work directed against me in the Name of Jesus Christ! I command you, evil spirit (s), to go in the name of Jesus Christ! Now GO!

Heavenly Father...I give you glory, and honor, and praise for protecting me. I thank you God for giving me power to overcome darkness, and setting me free. Thank you, Jesus, because my name is written in The Book of Life!



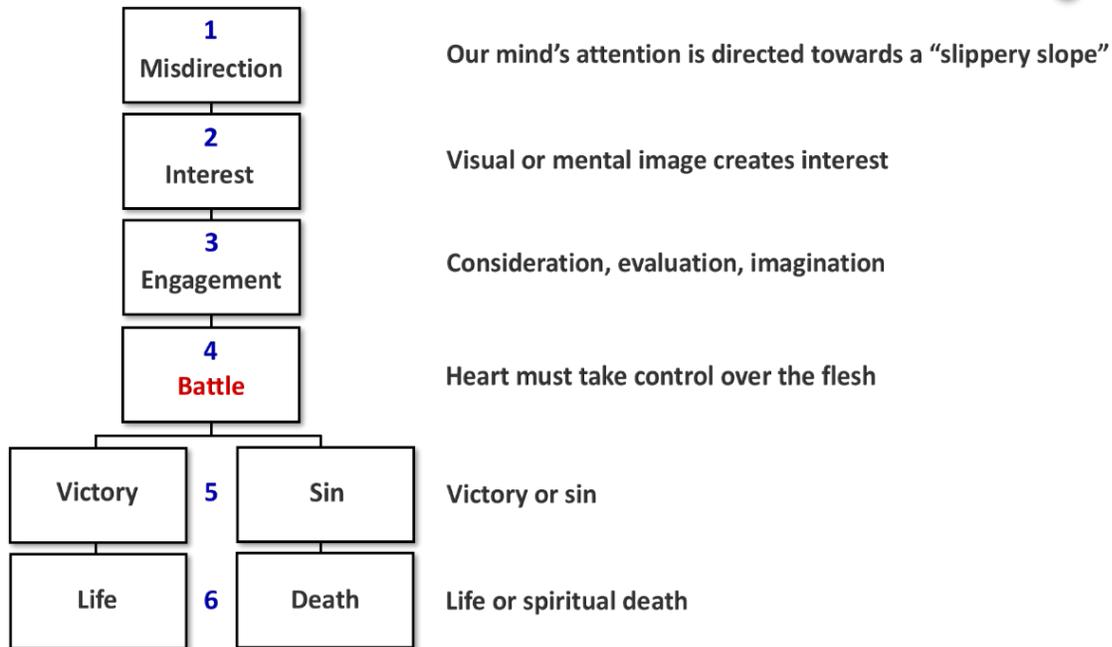
“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:9-14

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:12-14

6 Stages of Temptation

“6 Stages of Temptation” is a Bible study topic on UniqueBibleStudies.com. This study explores additional dimensions as to how we are tempted, and how to overcome the enemy.



It is my prayer your path is illuminated by God's Word; your fear is overcome with the peace of His promises; and your life eternal with Jesus Christ.

Please write. Your comments and/or questions are warmly appreciated. Be assured, I will not respond unless asked to do so.

My e-mail address is UniqueBibleStudies@Outlook.com.

All for the Glory of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ!
Harold D. Thomas