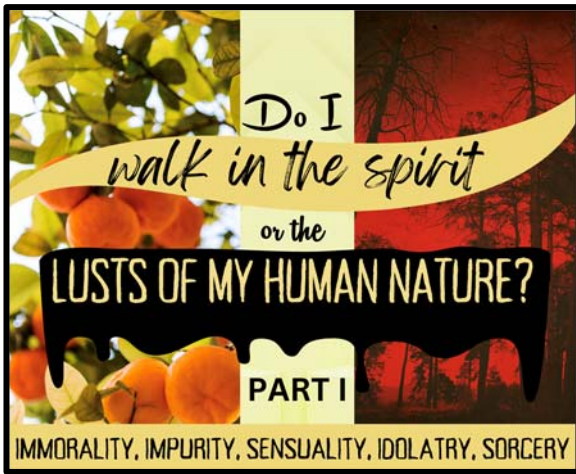




Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lusts of My Human Nature? (Part I)

Galatians 5:16: (NASB) *But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*



It is a simple equation with a guaranteed end result. Walk in the spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. As Christians living in an “anything goes world,” this straightforward statement can be easily overlooked and even ignored. Among the many challenges we face today, being like everyone else is among the most subtle temptations. We experience social pressure in our workplace, at school, with friends, family and neighbors. Combine all of that with the never-ending online influence of social media to conform or be negatively labeled and we experience an unrelenting onslaught of pressure. We conform or we suffer. How do we, as Christians, learn to identify - and then overcome - all that is wrong so we can truly follow all that is right?

This multiple-part series will clearly label what can keep us from inheriting God’s kingdom, and what helps us inherit that kingdom. In Galatians 5:16-25, the Apostle Paul intentionally contrasts “walking in the spirit” which produces the beautiful fruit of good character with the “lust of the flesh.” We want to run away from 15 fleshly things and run to the nine spiritual ones.

Paul provided us with two lists. The first is a list of what NOT to do. We are going to talk about these in detail over the next two episodes because they can be difficult to fight. The famous *fruit of the spirit* make up the second list:

**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**



We will explore these God-honoring characteristics in the coming weeks.

Jesus gave us basic fundamentals to build upon.



1. Humility:

Matthew 5:3: (NASB) *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

One would think humility would be a fruit of the spirit to be developed, but it is not on the list. Why? It is a basis from which we develop the fruit of the spirit.



2. Constancy in sacrifice:

Luke 9:23: (NASB) *And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

True discipleship goes beyond just being a “good person.”

- First, doing God's will and not our own takes humility to put our preferences out of the way by asking God for His direction over and over again.



- Second, taking up our cross means our sacrifice is for a lifetime. It is not an emotion that comes and goes.

Jesus taught us much more than this, but for this discussion we will use these simple points as a foundation for the detailed teachings of the Apostle Paul on the matter of living faithfully.



The Apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. His mission was to develop churches in places where idolatry and sensuality ruled the day.

What was Greece and Rome like in the 1st century?

- Civic cults united the community around a particular god. For instance, if you were an Ephesian, it was your civic duty to worship Artemis.
- There were also “ruler cults,” also called “imperial cults” with people worshipping emperors as gods or sons of gods, which was popular among the Galatians. For example, the emperor Nero claimed to be divine, as Apollo incarnate.
- Adultery was common. Divorce required only written or oral notice.
- Homosexuality between young men or between an older and a younger man was openly accepted.
- Sex and religion mixed as temple prostitution was a part of some religious worship.
- There were brutal gladiator combat spectacles in Roman amphitheaters. Quote from historian Everett Ferguson: “Executions were considered less exciting than mortal combat. Consequently, when executions were included in the day’s program, they were typically carried out during the lunch break.” This just tells us of the callous brutality of that day.

(Sources include: <https://probe.org/the-world-of-the-apostle-paul/>
<https://readingacts.com/2017/04/13/what-is-the-roman-imperial-cult/>
<https://www.learnreligions.com/the-early-church-at-rome-363409> Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*)

Paul was all too familiar with the challenge of not only being different but teaching others to be different as well, and all for the sake of Christ:

Galatians 5:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (This guarantee is simple: do this and you will have spiritual success!)* ¹⁷*For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

Paul began his reasoning with a stark comparison of godliness and sin. He makes it clear that there is no middle ground here.



So that you may not do the things that you please - our natural inclination, our human nature, will be to go in a certain direction. But there cannot be compromise down the middle in this case. Some in mainstream Christianity are so focused on inclusivity that the message and the mission get watered down. The standards keep getting lowered.

Paul is clear: we are either walking towards God or away from God.

Galatians 5:18: (NASB) *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

Paul explained what this means in the previous chapters of Galatians.

Here are few examples from the King James Version:

Galatians 2:16: *A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.*

Galatians 3:10: *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.*

Galatians 3:13: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law.*

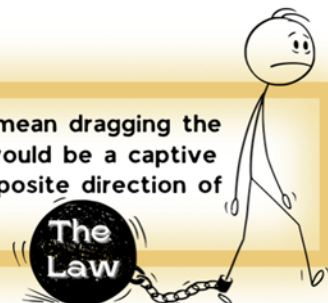
Galatians 3:23: *Before faith came, we were kept under the Law.*

Now we have the **promise by faith of Jesus Christ**, as it states in **Galatians 3:22**, because of his sacrifice instead of the old Law that could not redeem man from death. The sacrifice of Jesus was bigger than the Law and could accomplish more.

Up until the sacrifice of Jesus was complete, the only way to deal with the desires of the flesh was to be under the Mosaic Law God gave to the Jewish nation. The Law gave the Jews a way for atonement - a way to get back to God after they sinned. However, Paul spends a good portion of this letter to the Galatians refuting the influential sect of Christians in Galatia who were preaching that the Law applied to followers of Christ.

Here in chapter five, he is again reminding the Galatian Christians that to be under the Law is to not have the freedom that being in Christ brings.

Walking in the spirit does NOT mean dragging the old Law along with you. You would be a captive to the Law and going in the opposite direction of where you should be going.





As Paul prepares to delve into the matter of human versus spiritual direction, he adds a subtle detail to build his reasoning upon:

Galatians 5:16: (NASB) *But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the **desire** <1939> of the flesh.*

Desire: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1939 *epithumia*; a longing (especially for what is forbidden): — concupiscence, desire, lust (after)

In other words, desire is a deep internal drive. This word has both negative and positive meanings.

First, the negative:

Romans 6:12: (NASB) *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its **lusts** <1939>.*

Now for the positive meaning:

Luke 22:15: (NASB) *And he said to them, I have **earnestly** <1939> **desired** <1937> (verb form same word) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer...*

This word *desire* is much more consuming than just a passing thought. When we look at the Romans verse, *you obey its [sin's] lusts*, it feels very dark. But the exact same word where Jesus says he *earnestly desired* means the deep longings of his heart made him want to eat the Passover with the apostles, which was a beautiful thing to desire before his death.

Because desire is not always bad, we need to look into what is motivating the desire to determine its positive or negative worth.

The text again:

Galatians 5:16: (NASB) *But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the **desire** <1939> of the **flesh** <4561>.*

Flesh: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4561 *sarx*; flesh (as stripped of the skin), i.e. (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food), or as the symbol of what is external, or as the means of kindred), or (by implication) human nature (with its frailties [physically or morally] and passions), or (specifically) a human being (as such): — carnal(-ly + ly minded), flesh([-ly])

The New American Standard New Testament Greek Lexicon definition includes:

- The sensuous nature of man, "the animal nature" with cravings which incite to sin, and
- The earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God.

Walking by the spirit keeps us from fulfilling what our human nature naturally wants. However, everything about our human nature is not bad or wrong. Some of us might have a desire to serve others, or could be said to be hard working or loving by nature. Those, of course, are not the kind of desires we should be putting away. We are referring to putting away or guarding against the negative desires of our human nature.



Now Paul is ready to do his comparison. Here is the subtle but important difference:

Galatians 5:19: (NASB) Now the *deeds* <2041> of the *flesh* <4561> are evident...

Deeds: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2041 *ergon*;
from a primary (but obsolete) *ergo* (to work)

Greek-English Lexicon 1) business, employment, that which any one is occupied,
1a) that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking

Deeds are our actions - literally, what we do with ourselves, to what we dedicate ourselves. A longing and deep desire - either positive or negative - will inevitably produce some sort of action.

The *desires of the flesh* produce the *deeds of the flesh*.



Ideally, we want to cut off or redirect our improper desires before they get to the action stage. The Apostle Paul is actually telling us how to handle this.

If we walk in the spirit,

we will not follow after the desires of the flesh, and we therefore will not commit the deeds of the flesh!

Paul's message: Christians are called to walk according to God's spirit - His power and influence. We must confront the longings of our human nature to avoid our own negative human actions.



Developing the fruit of the spirit is not about us being a good person or having social acceptability. It is about being a godly, sacrificial disciple of Jesus.

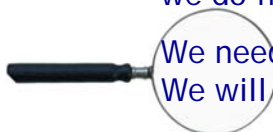
Christianity is not about being just a good person; it is about rising above human nature. Being a good person is very important - but it is not all that is involved in being Christlike.

The introduction to this message is simple - to do what everyone else does automatically sets us in the wrong direction!

So far, this almost looks impossible.

How can we always do exactly the opposite of what we want to do?

One of the challenges of trying to line up the stark differences between a spiritually-based life and a normal human life is drawing dramatic conclusions that are not implied in the comparison. To say that anything and everything we do from a human standpoint is wrong is to take this lesson out of context.



We need to pay attention to what is being focused on and what it brings us to. We will be repeating these phrases throughout our series.



Paul is now ready to begin listing those things which take away spiritual opportunity and life, contrasting them with those things which are a result of spiritual opportunity and life.

Let's first look at the "bad" list:

Galatians 5:19-25: (NASB) ¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

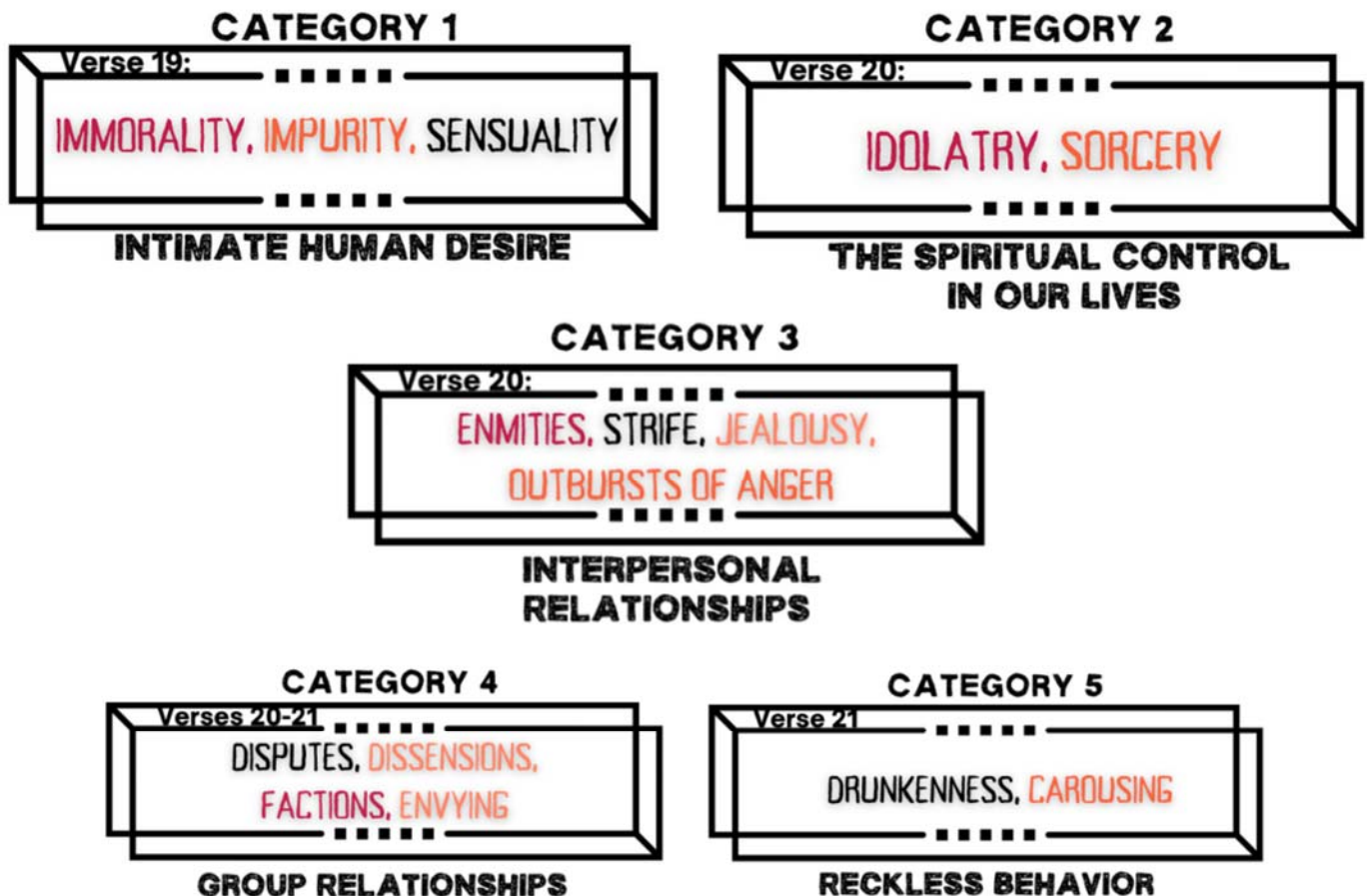
And here's the "good" list:

²²But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit.

There is a list of 15 very bad things and nine very good things, which is why this is a multiple-part series. We do not want to rush through any one of these things, even if they are negative. We need to put them into the appropriate perspective for our spiritual lives.

The first list are the deeds of the flesh. There are 15 specific deeds listed and set up in five categories:

¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are...





After Paul states examples of these categories of behavior, he covers anything he may have missed:

...and things like these, of which I forewarn you... that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul was smart to include the “catch-all” category of *and things like these*. There is no loophole to say something we want to do is okay because it is not mentioned by name on the list.

The deeds of the flesh are evident – they are obvious to all once they reach the outward action stage. But they should also be evident to us as the opposite of God-honoring during the thought stage. If our thoughts are focusing on any of these, warning bells should be going off. We can tell even when we just read through this list which things we need to avoid and which are good to develop.

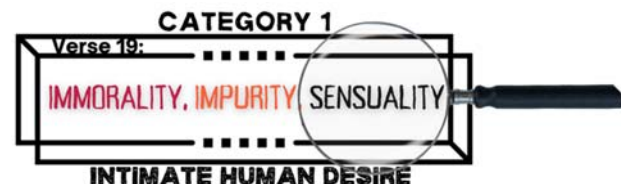
The first category is INTIMATE HUMAN DESIRE, as described in Galatians 5:19.



We might assume Paul would begin with the more subtle behaviors and end with the most dramatic. But here he does opposite. He starts with the most dramatic action. Let's look at these behaviors in the opposite order of Paul's list to build understanding.

What is being focused on? **SENSUALITY**

Today, sensuality is used to describe everything from intimate beauty to inspiration, and even an expression of modern luxury. This word sounds much more acceptable in today's context than the actual definition in the Greek language.



Sensuality: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #766. *aselgeia*; licentiousness (sometimes including other vices)

Greek-English Lexicon: unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence (rude and disrespectful behavior)

When we compare the ancient Greek definition with our modern definition, we see that in our world it is not a big deal. Back then, it was attention-getting, abrupt and something a Christian should stay far away from. Its original meaning is important to understand.

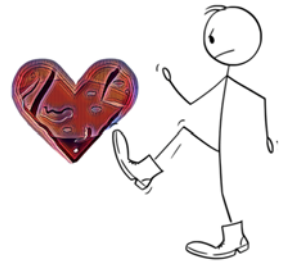
The thought here is to have sexuality on one's mind and be overtly expressive of it:

Ephesians 4:17-19: (NASB) *¹⁷So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to **sensuality <766>** for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.*



Paul is saying, you once were there, now you are here. He does not want the Ephesians to return to *every kind of impurity with greediness* or any of what is connected to sensuality.

Having become callous - what does callousness look like in our hearts? If you have a callous on your hands or fingers, you can no longer feel. Callouses from hard work or playing the guitar, for example, are good things. Being desensitized to that which is godly is not good. But that is still not as bad as being *seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron*, as described in 1 Timothy 4:2. Here there is still hope for a callous to soften!



Given themselves over to sensuality - "One act of lust leads to two, two leads to four, and four leads to an all-consuming desire. Its appetite is never satiated." - *Your Brain on Porn*, Covenant Eyes.

Sensuality can lead to an unquenchable desire. The Apostle Paul is saying do not go in this direction, as it is one of *the deeds of the flesh*. This kind of sensuality comes from within. It is a palatable desire that expresses itself without regard for the sacredness of human sexuality we, as Christians, are taught to respect.

The phrase "sacredness of human sexuality" is important. Desire is good and valuable - it just needs to be aimed at the right target. This is different from sex being recreational and where every kind of deviation is normalized and celebrated. Promiscuity becomes the default norm and abstinence is viewed as weird or unhealthy.

HOMEWORK

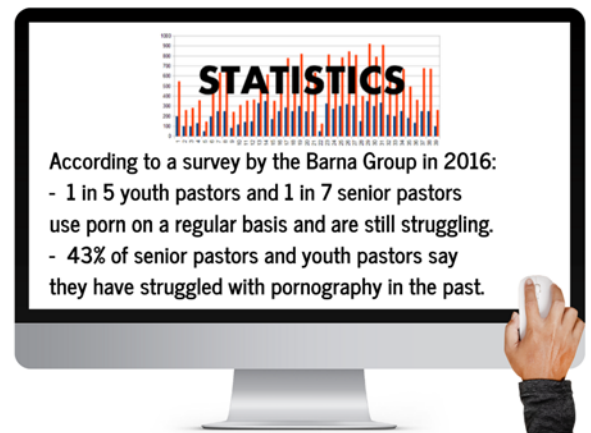


Read the entire second chapter of 2 Peter

The Apostle Peter uses this word *sensuality* several times to describe false Christian prophets:

2 Peter 2:1-2: (NASB) ¹*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.* ²*Many will follow their **sensuality** <766>, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned...*

Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned - this reminds us of the sad headlines we have all seen about the sex scandals in not only the monolith denominations of Christianity like Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist, but also at the big Protestant and Evangelical mega churches. The *way of the truth* is certainly maligned as parishioners who trusted their leaders to live one way find out they were secretly living another.





This must be one of the most disillusioning things to experience in your church. Instead of seeing a representative of Christ, we see a representative of human sexuality that is unable to control themselves, exploiting others for their own lust. This is a massive, difficult problem in churches.

What does this kind of sensuality - this "unbridled lust" and "shamelessness" bring us to?

A dead end of human, godless and selfish desire.

2 Peter 2:17-19: (NASB) ¹⁷These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by *sensuality* <766>, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, ¹⁹promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

This is something to think about: A person is enslaved by what overcomes them. That is addiction. Unfortunately, we have to pause to talk about the problem of pornography. We said part of the definition of "sensuality" in the Greek was insolence, meaning disrespect. Here is another quote from the booklet, *Your Brain on Porn*, by Covenant Eyes: "Pornography is essentially wrong because of its message: it rips sexuality from its relational context and presents human beings not as creatures made in God's image, but as sexual commodities - something to be bought and sold."

That is disgraceful and it is everywhere. These scriptures written 2,000 years ago warn us not to give in to fleshly desires and sensuality long before they were as bad as they are now.

Studies show the similarities in the brain between alcohol addiction and porn addiction. MRIs show the reward centers of the brain light up when someone addicted to pornography sees certain photos, which is exactly what happens when an alcoholic sees a picture of a drink.

(Source: Adam Withnall, "Pornography addiction lead to same brain activity as alcoholism or drug abuse, study shows," The Independent, 22 Sept. 2013.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/pornography-addiction-leads-to-same-brain-activity-as-alcoholism-or-drug-abuse-study-shows-8832708.html>)

There is also what is known as the "escalation effect."

"The habitual use of pornography leads to greater tolerance of sexually explicit material over time, requiring the viewer to consume more novel and bizarre material to achieve the same level of arousal or interest."

(Source: Dolf Zillmann, "Influence of unrestrained access to erotic on adolescents' and young adults' disposition toward sexuality," Journal of Adolescent Health 27 (2), Supplement 1, 2000, as quoted in *Your Brain on Porn*, Covenant Eyes)

Scripturally, this word for sensuality is never expressed in a positive way. It is always something to run away from.



Rising to a Spiritual Life



To be “sensual” according to the New Testament is to be inappropriately expressive of sexually-driven desires. It brings no goodness or godliness to anyone as it seeks to only provoke depravity. Such feelings and thoughts have no place in the life of any Christian.

This deed of the flesh proclaims a broken moral compass.



What am I dwelling on?

How do I redirect that focus?

Leaving behind depravity, let's talk about clean hands and a pure heart:

Psalms 24:3-4: (NASB) ³Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.



Rick has been in the difficult position of having to counsel couples on the issue of pornography. Can you give us an insight of how that works? We cannot unsee what we see, so we cannot help what triggers our brain as pleasurable. How can one get around that?



I am not a professional counselor. But the privilege is to be an encouragement and a help to others. To encourage, I help people understand what the input is and how degraded it is. We look to replace the input, replace the activity that comes from the input, and then you have accountability. In my own personal experience over many years, the best way to find success (no matter how hard this sounds) is to talk to both spouses together. What you say to one spouse, the other hears. There is blatant, brutal accountability and an understanding of righteousness versus degradation - small step by small step you try to make progress.

You cannot “unsee” what you have seen, but you can make it smaller in the background of your mind. You can change its label. Instead of something that is exciting, it is something that is repulsive. All of this takes time.



What role does shame play in this? Too much and the person gets buried and feels a way back is impossible. But too little and their conscience is not pricked enough to help them stay within the lines of what is acceptable.

Shame is very important. To feel the shame of sin is an important part of repentance. Repentance is not just saying, "I'm sorry." Repentance is turning around and going in the opposite direction. One of the great motivators is appropriately-placed shame. The decision of what level of shame is appropriate is hard. God's grace plays an important role here.

**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**



What fruit of the spirit of God's power and influence can help us overcome sensuality?

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*



In this situation, I think goodness would help. Keep the goodness of the marriage relationship so nothing gets in between it. There is great contentment in a marriage when it is kept pure.

Did a different fruit first come to your mind? Apply it!

We are given the answers just as we are shown the trials and the problems. This is how the Apostle Paul is working us through this.

We have only looked at one of these *deeds of the flesh* and already it is depressing! We are so glad to have the *fruit of the spirit* for inspiration.

**We began with sensuality as the least of the misdirected human desires.
How much worse can it get?**

The sad thing is, there always seems to be multiple ways for things to get worse. As we begin to examine the path that sensuality brings us to, we realize the next step from thinking and acting out in a certain, wishful way is to make that depraved approach a way of life. It has been said that "thoughts are things." When we allow our thoughts and desires to take such root, they shape our character.



What is being focused on?
IMPURITY

Impurity: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #169 *akathartos*; impure (ceremonially, morally [lewd] or specially, [demonic])



Greek-English Lexicon: 1) not cleansed, unclean 1a) in a ceremonial sense: that which must be abstained from according to the Levitical law 1b) in a moral sense: unclean in thought and life

Impurity is a developed way of life outside of God's grace and walking away from the redemption of Christ.



How do we undo what we did in the past when we come into Christ?



If we are IN Christ and go down this wrong road, how do we get out?



We carry our past with us - what are we supposed to do with it? It is so important to not only confess our sins to the heavenly Father and to repent, but to seek help from our Christian fellowship. Be accountable to someone we can trust to help us spiritually. When we fall and reach out, we can get a hand to pull us up.

For those who are helping, be sure to stand on solid ground with great humility, recognizing it is God through Christ working in you.

Much of the answer comes down to repentance and accountability.



We do not "accidentally" fall into a life of impurity - we might lapse into a moment of sin, but a sexual habit, addiction or dependency takes time with red flags along the way.

Those red flags are important opportunities for intervention and help. Again, *impurity* here means "unclean in thought and life" - this is who you have become. It is a dangerous place to stay.

Spiritual impurity:

Mark 3:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰for he had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around him in order to touch him. ¹¹Whenever the **unclean <169>** spirits saw him, they would fall down before him and shout, You are the son of God!

These *unclean* or impure spirits are the fallen angels. Their way of life is to be a minion of Satan. They did not "accidentally" disobey God to follow Satan. They left God. When we know better but do not choose to do better, do not seek help, do not make ourselves accountable to anyone - we are in danger of living an impure life.

We are looking at impurity as a way of life. Sensuality happens inside our hearts and minds. It expresses itself here and there. However, if we continuously stay on that path, we end up living an impure life, an intentionally God-less life. These are the choices we made, and the fallen angels are a classic example.



What does impurity bring us to?

A dead end of a human, godless and spiritually-detoured life.

Romans 1:21,24: (NASB) ²¹For even though they (the context in [verses 18-20](#) refers to ungodly and unrighteous people, who substitute the truth about God - which they know within them - with their imaginations, so that they can continue sinning) *knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to **impurity <169>**, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Such an impure way of life sets us up for further sinful actions. It is important to have a trusted someone to hold us accountable.

Is the following a good idea? There are new tools available to do this electronically. There is something dubbed "shameware" - software that, in effect, shames you. You download an app and it allows your "accountability partner" to see everything you see on your phone or computer - all your internet searches, phone calls, apps, pictures. Churches are buying these to use with their parishioners, as are parents with their kids.

"Covenant Eyes" we quoted from earlier is one of the more popular companies that provide this. As you can imagine, there is a lot of controversy around privacy issues as the service has access to your entire digital life. It could also create a power imbalance leading to abuse between church leaders and congregants. The point is, churches are finding this to be such a big problem with their congregants - and clergy - that they see the need for something to be done. People are trying to get creative about helping overcome the problem.

(Source: <https://www.wired.com/story/covenant-eyes-anti-porn-accountability-monitoring-apps/>)



As someone who has had the privilege to help walk alongside many people in many circumstances - I would not touch this with a ten-foot pole. I would keep the accountability to the spoken word between us because that is the way humanity is designed to be. There are many problems that could arise for abuse with this kind of monitoring.

Accountability requires an active response from the one sinning, a confession, a reaching out, a true repentance - not a spying on their lives by an outside party to catch them in sin.

Such an impure life sets us up for further sinful actions - the natural result from walking this road.



Rising to a Spiritual Life



To live an impure life is to live outside of God's grace. Dwelling on sensuality influences us into embracing a state of moral decay where desire and circumstances guide our decisions and direction. While we may go to church on Sunday, our daily life is Christ-less. Impurity as a deed of the flesh shows who we really are.



What road am I walking down?

What do I hope nobody asks me about?

It could be easy for Christians to lead a secretly impure life. After all, most people around us make positive baseline assumptions: He would never cheat on his wife; he is a Christian. She would never be addicted to pornography; she is a Christian.

(Source: Shawn McDowell, Michael Leahy, and Clay Olson, "Forum: Talking to Students," The Set Free Global Summit, April 6, 2016) This material is more aggressive, more harmful, more violent, more degrading and damaging than any other time in the history of the world. And this generation growing up is dealing with it to an intensity and scale no other generation in the history of the world has ever had to.



The damaging personal consequences of porn and how to be free of them

Let's get back to a positive scripture!

Hebrews 10:22: (NASB) *Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Here is the antidote! It is not an instant cure, but it is a process - to have that *full assurance of faith*, to move forward in a positive way when dealing with this impurity of our life habits.

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control





What fruit of God's power and influence can help us overcome impurity?

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Patience. Our listeners who realize they are going down a bad road would probably have shut this podcast off by now if they were not interested in moving in a different direction. God is merciful and there is a lot of help and forgiveness available in the Scriptures. We can find help from friends, family, trusted advisors and professional counseling. It may take time to get up those steps, but keep moving forward. For those on the outside looking in, we need to have patience and understanding in order to be a positive and helpful influence on that person.

CATEGORY 1



What is being focused on?

IMMORALITY/FORNICATION



There are five words that describe *immorality/fornication* in the New Testament. They are all related and tell a complete story. Each of these five words have the word "porn" in them, related to our English word "pornography."

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4205 *pornos* ; from *pernemi* (to sell, akin to the base of 4097); a (male) prostitute (as venal), i.e. (by analogy) a debauchee (libertine)

"venal" means capable of being bought or obtained for money or other valuable consideration

"debauchee" means a person given to excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures

"libertine" means a person, especially a man, who behaves without moral principles or a sense of responsibility, especially in sexual matters

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4204 *porne* ; feminine of #4205; a strumpet; figuratively, an idolater

"strumpet" means a woman who has many casual sexual encounters or relationships - note: this word figuratively means an idolater

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4203 *porneuo* ; to act the harlot, i.e. (literally) indulge unlawful lust (of either sex), or (figuratively) practice idolatry

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4202 *porneia* ; harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry

Sexuality outside of its appropriate place is idolatry because it worships the created rather than the Creator

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1608 *ekporneuo* ; to be utterly unchaste



For example, #4202 is *porneia*, a noun meaning harlotry, including adultery and incest; and figuratively, idolatry. In other words, sexuality outside of its appropriate place is engaging in idolatry, as it worships the created and not the Creator. This word implies a persistent lifestyle of sexual immorality.

All of those five words used in the New Testament define sex outside of marriage, and they all come down to being idolatrous - walking away from God. This is not just doing something we are not supposed to do - it is doing something that makes us walk away from God.



Discussing sex and sin-related questions using biblical principles

Sensuality is the feeling and inappropriate expression of sexual feelings. *Impurity* is the living of a life that creates its own morals outside of godly standards.

These two deeds of the flesh combined are small steps from vile immoral actions:

1 Corinthians 6:16-20: (NASB) ¹⁶Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, The two shall become one flesh. ¹⁷But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. ¹⁸Flee **immorality <4202>**. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Flee immorality. Where should you run? In the opposite direction!

What begins in our minds is bad enough, but when it spreads to the intentions and actions of our lives, we have truly left godliness behind.

What does immorality bring us to?

A dead end of human, godless and often covenant-breaking actions

Matthew 5:27-29: (NASB) ²⁷You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Gehenna).

Jesus told us how to overcome these issues. Identify the thought as being sinful and not acceptable. Obviously, we are not supposed to physically rip out body parts - this is metaphorical. Jesus tells us to root it out at its source.

Nobody can see our thinking. We see it, we think it, we acknowledge it and then we do something with it. According to Scripture, we must put these things away. They are the *desire of the flesh* that lead to the *deeds of the flesh* - we need to cut these off early on.





Fornication may be relabeled in our world today, but that does not change what it means to God! "Well, that is only the way I express myself sexually..." "This is my body, I can do whatever I like..." If we are in the world, that attitude fits in. But God's definition has never changed. We can do and say whatever we want, but we are either acting in accordance with God's sacred standards, or we are running far away from them. God does not change! We cannot fool ourselves.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



No matter where you look in the Bible, fornication is a heinous sin before God. It is a deed of the flesh that is a sin of the body. It violates the sacredness and holiness of any Christian's life. To rationalize it is foolish. To confess, repent and ask forgiveness is to seek a godly path of a spiritual life.



Hebrews 13:4: (NASB) *Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for **fornicators** <4205> and adulterers God will judge.*

This is an important scripture because it shows that sexuality has a sacred and honorable place in God's plan. But when taken out of that sacred place, it can be dastardly, evil and dark.

**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**



What fruit of God's power and influence can help us overcome immorality?

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) *²²But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*



Let's bring out the big guns on this one. It has to be self-control in overcoming sensuality or fornication. Draw the line between right and wrong. Pre-marital and extra-marital sex is a sin. It is wrong! There are no test drives. After the commitment to marriage is made, work hard to keep your spouse the desire of your heart and the apple of your eye - for when they know it and feel it, you both will be satisfied.

Marriage is to be held in honor.

Fornication, impurity and sensuality certainly are an attention-getting list! Now that Paul has our attention, we need to listen.

It is easy to see how these sins of intimate human desire are first on Paul's list. Is what's next as bad as these?

What comes next is just as bad, and in some ways worse, as the next two *deeds of the flesh* have to do with our intimate relationship with God. This is another interesting reversal by Paul. The Ten Commandments began with God and then dealt with humanity. Paul puts God second in this list so the Gentiles reading it would readily identify with their humanity first, and thereby see more clearly the power of the one true God in their lives.



What is being focused on?
IDOLATRY

Idolatry: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1495 *eidololatreia*; image-worship (literally or figuratively)

Greek-English Lexicon: 1) the worship of false gods, idolatry 1a) of the formal sacrificial feasts held in honor of false gods 1b) of avarice, as a worship of Mammon



We mentioned a little of what it was like in Paul's day, with state-sponsored civic cults for the worship of local deities. They would be honored with festivals, sacrifices, athletic contests and mystery rites. Rome at this time was heavily influenced by Greek mythology and the practice of imperial cults - worship of the emperor. Most inhabitants of Rome were polytheistic, worshipping several different gods and demigods depending on their own situations and preferences. There were many temples, shrines, and places of worship. Most forms of worship were tolerated.

(Source: summarized from <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/apospaul.html>)



The first two Commandments:

Exodus 20:3-5: (NASB) ³*You shall have no other gods before Me.* ⁴*You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.* ⁵*You shall not worship them or serve them...*

It is surprising how many times the Bible discusses idolatry at the same time as sexual immorality – often in the same sentence or verse. If we are serious about our commitment to God, we certainly do not want to break the most basic and important commandment of having *no other gods before Me*.

Paul put the human part first because he was dealing with a Gentile audience. They did not have a strong sense of one true God, but they were aware of how they lived as Gentiles before they converted to Christianity.

Having other gods – idolatry – means the elevation of anyone or anything in our lives that would challenge God’s rightful place. Some potential “other” gods include ego, people, success, comfort, wealth, power, social position or even cell phones or social media!

Think about how much easier the Gentile Christians would grasp their past idolatries by having the human intimacies listed first – because all of that is idolatry as well!



What does idolatry bring us to?

A dead end of human and godless allegiance that thrives in sin.

1 Peter 4:3-4: (NASB) ³*For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable **idolatries** <1495>.* ⁴*In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;*

excesses of dissipation – other translations say:

- ➔ *flood of wild living* (Christian Standard Bible)
- ➔ *flood of reckless indiscretion* (Berean Standard Bible)
- ➔ *immoral freedom* (Amplified Bible)

1 Peter 4:4: (NLT) *Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you.*

In other words, peer pressure! Is any of that going on today? How about social media, anyone?

Idolatry is not just about bowing down before a physical thing. It is a state of mind that puts something or someone above God – and that can even be ourselves. The fact that idolatry is constantly listed in the context of having no actual images to worship (as it can just be in our minds) tells us how deeply an idolatrous attitude can be corrupting to our very lives!

Was the Apostle Paul dealing with these kinds of sins in his life?

Romans 7:15: (NIV) *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*



Paul was not dealing with idolatry and impure actions in his own life; rather, his concern was the difficulty of staying on target all of the time, of not relaxing in his Christian service to others, of not letting his guard down. These are different than idolatry.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



Idolatry is perhaps the most insidious of all of these deeds of the flesh.

Because worshipping anything is first an “in your mind” activity, it does not need an actual formed image to continue its hold on us. Idolatry in ANY form is in direct opposition to our Christian principles.



Assess this carefully and honestly – what are the idols in my life?

Romans 12:2: (NASB) *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

We cannot prove what *is good and acceptable and perfect* without the *renewing of our minds*, without that transformation, without the higher way of living that puts idolatry aside. We cannot *prove what the will of God is* unless we are in reverent harmony with it. We can point to it and intellectually talk about it, but we cannot prove it because the proof is in how we live.

**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**



What fruit of God’s power and influence can help us overcome idolatry?

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³*gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*



Love. It all goes back to Matthew 22:34-36 when Jesus was asked for the greatest commandment. *Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* If God is so high up in our respect, appreciation and gratitude, we will not be able to lob anything higher to set up as an idol above Him. Our most important

thing will always be to honor Him, even in the mundane parts of our lives, and especially in our secret dangerous parts we have to set traffic cones around.



Idolatry is one of the deeds of the flesh.

Remember, the desires of the flesh lead to the deeds of the flesh, and we need the fruit of the spirit to help us overcome these desires. We need to slow down and look at these carefully so that we can build the inspiration to move forward.



What is being focused on?

SORCERY

Sorcery: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5331 *pharmakeia*; medication ("pharmacy"), i.e. (by extension) magic (literally or figuratively):—sorcery, witchcraft

The Greek word for sorcery has to do with witchcraft and magical arts. What about white witchcraft, or so-called "good" witchcraft? Still no.



We cannot dabble in sorcery on any level, at any time, under any condition and not with any rationalization. It is no accident that sorcery follows idolatry in Paul's list.

Once we have allegiance to anything other than God, we become open to doing ungodly things to feed that allegiance:

Deuteronomy 18:10: (NASB) *There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer <3784>.*

Sorcerer: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3784 *kashaph*; properly, to whisper a spell, i.e. to enchant or practice magic

Scripturally, there are no positive uses of this word.



(Source: *Paul and the Classical World of His Time*, Houston Christian University)

"The paraphernalia of magic was very much part of the Greco-Roman world. Many magic artifacts have been recovered from late antiquity. We have magical papyri, amulets, books, cups, bowls, and metal foils and plates. Some of this magic was for the purpose of protection, to drive away illness and evil spirits. Some of the magic was for malignant purposes, to send illness and/or evil spirits against an enemy. Some of the magic was manipulative, as seen in love charms designed to coerce someone (usually a woman) to become a lover. Magic words, magic sounds, diagrams, symbols, figures, ink in different colors, and pieces of iron (especially iron crucifixion nails!) were utilized to strengthen the potency of the charms."



Check out our CQ Kids videos:

WHY SHOULD WE AVOID FORTUNE TELLING,
WITCHCRAFT AND OUIJA BOARDS?

christianquestions.com/youtube



What does sorcery bring us to?

A dead end of human, godless and destructive rituals of evil.

1 John 4:1: (NASB) *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

Any pattern of godlessness, of misplaced worship and devotion, ALWAYS produces the same results! Remember, we either are going in the right direction - or, the wrong direction.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



No matter how you try and define it, sorcery or witchcraft as a deed of the flesh is a dramatic extension of idolatry into dark and godless practices. As Christians, we must avoid any association with such things, as they unequivocally lead us away from God!



Do I have a curiosity
about the supernatural that
goes beyond scriptural guidelines?



Ephesians 5:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰*Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.* ¹¹*Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;* ¹²*for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.*

Curiosity can be a significant tool of Satan. Curiosity is one of humankind's great strengths and easily exploited weaknesses. It can draw us down the wrong path. Idolatry is actually easy to get entangled with since it is not always about worshipping actual idols or spirits. Sorcery is not as easy to fall into, but it can be fascinating because it is all about having power. When we follow our curiosity down those dark paths we can get into difficult situations. *Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness!*

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What fruit of God's power and influence can help us overcome sorcery:

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³*gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*



Faithfulness to God is paramount to avoiding sorcery in witchcraft, and the temptations are ever so subtle, even its influence on our children. Things like the *Harry Potter* books and movies, games like *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Warcraft*, television shows like *The Good Witch*. Satan would love us to be accepting of these dark influences. Being faithful to righteousness and godliness keeps us safe.

Stay away from things attached to these dark deeds of the flesh. Everything that we are led to do by human desires is not bad, but we must run away from those on the Apostle Paul's "bad" list.

In Part I of this series, we have introduced the Apostle Paul's comparison of the deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the spirit. He is meticulous in giving a comprehensive list of those things that will keep us from spiritual growth.

This shows how much he truly cares for each and every true disciple of Christ. We have covered deeds of the flesh regarding intimate human desire and spiritual control in our lives.

In our next episode, we will cover the deeds of the flesh regarding interpersonal and group relationships, as well as reckless behavior. All of this sets up the amazing growth available to us when we develop the fruit of the spirit!

We need to walk through this journey small step by small step so that we can see the big picture and say, "I know what to do and what not to do. I know never to go in the wrong direction!" This is what the Apostle Paul is teaching us.



*So, do I walk in the spirit or the lusts of my human nature?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie, and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on November 14, 2022

Ep. 1255: Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lust
of My Human Nature? (Part II)



Check out our CQ Kids videos:
WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?
christianquestions.com/youtube

Study Questions follow

Study QUESTIONS

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Ep. 1254: Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lusts of My Human Nature? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1254-human-nature/>

See:



1. What are two basic fundamentals Jesus gave us to build upon? Why is humility *not* a fruit of the spirit? What is the Apostle Paul's point in Galatians 5:16-17? Explain fully. (See Matthew 5:3, Luke 9:23, Galatians 5:22,23)
2. What are the opposite meanings of "desire"? How can we determine whether desire has a positive or negative worth? What keeps us from following our more depraved human desires? When is the ideal time to cut-off or redirect our improper desires? (See Romans 6:12, Luke 22:15, Galatians 5:16)
3. Sensuality - Give the actual definition of sensuality in Greek. (See Galatians 5:19)
 - How does Ephesians 4:17-19 describe the Gentile Christians' former lives? What does "callousness" look like in our hearts? (See 1 Timothy 4:2)
 - What warning does 2 Peter 2:1-2,17-19 give us?
 - What is the difference between the "sacredness of sexuality" and the Greek word translated sensuality as it is used in the Bible?
 - Which fruit of the spirit do you think can help overcome improper sensuality? (See Galatians 5:22-23)
4. Impurity - How is impurity a step beyond sensuality? (See Romans 1:21,24)
 - If we were in an impure life, or are now struggling with this, what should we do?
 - What makes the fallen angels "impure"? (See Mark 3:10-11)
 - If we wish to be held accountable so that we can leave an impure life, where should we look?
 - Which fruit of the spirit do you think can help overcome impurity? (See Galatians 5:22-23)
5. Immorality - Describe the meanings of the five words translated immorality/fornication (See Rewind).
 - How is immorality idolatrous?
 - Describe the relationship of sensuality, impurity and immorality. (See 1 Corinthians 6:16-20)
 - What was Jesus' point for us in Matthew 5:27-29?
 - Which fruit of the spirit do you think can help overcome immorality? (See Galatians 5:22-23)
6. Idolatry - How do the first two Commandments apply to us? (See Exodus 20:3-5)
 - How does 1 Peter 4:3-4 describe peer pressure? Does this apply to you?
 - Did the Apostle Paul have to deal with idolatry and impure choices in his own life? (See Romans 7:15)
 - How can we prove "that which is good and acceptable and perfect"? (See Romans 12:2)
 - Which fruit of the spirit do you think can help us overcome idolatry? (See Galatians 5:22-23)
7. Sorcery - Define sorcery. What could this be in our modern times, besides actual sorcery? (See 1 John 4:1)
 - In what kind of sorcery or witchcraft is it okay for us to participate? (See Deuteronomy 18:10)
 - Why might sorcery be fascinating?
 - Which fruit of the spirit do you think can help us overcome sorcery? (See Galatians 5:22-23)
8. Read these beautiful instructions from God- what is He telling you? (Rewind - Psalms 24:3-4 [page 10], Hebrews 10:22 [page 14], Hebrews 13:4 [page 17], Ephesians 5:10-12 [page 22])

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1254: Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lusts of My Human Nature? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1254-human-nature/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What are two basic fundamentals Jesus gave us to build upon? Why is humility *not* a fruit of the spirit? What is the Apostle Paul's point in Galatians 5:16-17? Explain fully. (See Matthew 5:3, Luke 9:23, Galatians 5:22,23)
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