

CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

FEEDING THE INNER MAN

31

SERIES

In dedication to all the soul-winners that need a Bible study on the feeding the inner man.

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“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 Bible gives us very clear instructions on the importance of what we allow into our being. Our fleshly desires within are at odds with our spiritual desires. The flesh is opposed to the Spirit. The flesh seeks to fulfill its own desires and drives. Usually, they are self-destructive when not governed by the Spirit of God. Our fleshly nature does not want to operate within the realm of the Spirit. It hates to pray, to be a witness, to read the Word of God, and to be obedient to the things of God. It desires the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is self-seeking and self-centered.

In the next few sections of this study, we will study the importance of this teaching and how to feed the inner spiritual man as opposed to the fleshly nature of man.

THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH

The Apostle Paul includes a long list of examples of the works of the flesh. While this list is not meant to include all of the workings of the flesh, it includes quite a variety of sinful fleshly desires. The apostle understood that there would always be new forms of fleshly desires sprung up or invented, so he included the words, “and the like.” In other words, there are other desires such as pornography, drugs, smoking, gambling and others that could be added to this list using the words, “and the like,” since they are definitely works of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Notice that the apostle does not only name these sins as works of the flesh, but that he says those that practice these sins will not make it to heaven. Life before Christ was a life that took part in the pleasures of sinful flesh. When we come to the Lord, he washes us and cleanses us from all these behaviors through repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The apostle gives us another form of that list and addresses our new status in Jesus after receiving New Testament salvation.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Notice that the two things that accomplish the washing, sanctifying, and justifying are:

1. The Name of the Lord Jesus (Water Baptism)
2. The Spirit of our God (Receiving the Spirit)

OUR FLESHLY DIET

We have already seen that our flesh is at odds with our spirit. Just as our human body has an appetite for certain foods that can be unhealthy or healthy, our spiritual body needs to be properly nourished with the things of the Spirit. As what we feed our body will affect us, also what we feed our spiritual body affects our spirit. If we feed our bodies the fleshly desires and do not feed our spirit much, then our body will not desire the things of the Spirit.

The man of the flesh has the nature of sin. He is disobedient. He wants to live for himself, instead of for Christ. He seeks his own pleasure over God's. He has no desire to live for God and cannot please him.

Romans 8:5-8

“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. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Romans 13:14

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

The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit and does not have any desire to do so. It's a very unhealthy diet to live by.

A SPIRITUAL DIET

Jesus spoke of the need to have spiritual food and compared it to our human food. He compares the Word of God to bread. We need spiritual nourishment that comes from reading the Scriptures and applying them to our lives.

Matthew 4:4

“But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

The Apostle Peter describes the Word of God as milk that gives the new believer nourishment to grow and develop into a mature Christian. It's through the application of the Scriptures into our lives that we put off the old man of the fleshly desires.

1 Peter 2:1-3

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

The Spirit of God also gives us spiritual nourishment. When the believer receives the Spirit of God, he/she begins to change their desires from the old self to the new self. The old ways of life are replaced with a new bright life in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17

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

There is no greater feeling than when you are feeding your spirit the right things, that you feel nourished and strengthened to the point you feel complete fulfillment. You no longer hunger for the sinful desires of the past.

Matthew 5:6

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”

ESTABLISHING A HEALTHY SPIRIT

So, how do we make sure once that we have become born again Christians, that we maintain a healthy spiritual diet? Just because we have been baptized and filled with his Spirit, does not mean that we will have no pull towards the fleshly desires. It depends on what you feed your body. To ensure that you have a healthy spiritual diet, there are several things of utmost importance.

First, we already established the need for reading the Word of God. Second, we must understand, that our past experiences of sinful behaviors have an impact on us and it sometimes takes time to cleanse our minds of these things. You cannot remove these by counseling, reading, addiction programs—although these can be helpful. The new man that is renewed by God’s Spirit becomes a new man. The only way he can be renewed is by the Spirit of God. So when you get into the Spirit while worshipping, the past desires are cleansed out of your mind. Drugs, alcohol, suicide, pornography, and other desires are washed out of your mind. The Spirit of God empowers the new believer to live above these fleshly desires.

Colossians 3: 8-10

“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”

Ultimately nothing is as effective as cleansing your past by the moving of his Spirit.

Ephesians 4:22-24

“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

Where does this renewing of the mind take place? It happens while you are praying in the Spirit. When you are speaking in tongues, there is a cleansing taking place that nothing else can do. The change often happens during the altar call service while you are praying in the Spirit. That’s why you should always come to the altar for prayer following the service. It changes your appetite and desires. You no longer want the old things from before.

Another very important aspect of nourishing your spirit is through your church attendance. The people that miss church services often are weak Christians. They are not properly nourishing their spirits. Since they are feeding their spirit small amounts of nourishment, they will not survive in their walk with God. Every service is vital to the growth and maturity of a Christian. You are what you eat. If you feed yourself spiritual things, you will be a man or woman of the Spirit. If you feed yourself fleshly desires, then you will be a carnal person. That’s why the Bible says concerning church attendance:

Hebrews 10:25

“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.”

So, make some decisions today to ensure that you are feeding your spirit the necessary spiritual elements that you need to live an overcoming life in the Spirit!

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