

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 3: THE BATTLE WITHIN ME

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity. Include time to discuss these principles and how to effectively apply them to your life.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 3: THE BATTLE WITHIN ME

PURPOSE

Participants will understand the conflict between our two natures as described in the Bible. They will better understand the role of our inherent sinful nature versus the nature of God within them, and how to rely on the Spirit of God as they overcome their propensity for sin.

LEADER'S NOTE

There is a story often attributed to Native American groups about two dogs which are within every person. These dogs – one good, one evil – are constantly in battle with each other. The good dog represents truth, love, joy, sacrifice, and honesty while the other represents selfishness, dishonesty, and hate. The story asks which dog is stronger, which dog will win; it concludes that it's the one that is fed the most. This is a picture of the conflict inside each of us which is sometimes hard to see; however, it is a battle fought by every believer. It may sometimes feel as though we have two natures. This is not true – once we are Christian we have are a new person who still fights against tendencies toward sin. Ensure participants know they are not expected to combat their flesh alone. God working in us will allow us to overcome our sin.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Do you feel like people are mostly good, mostly bad, or a mix of both? What viewpoint do people around you take? What viewpoint has biblical support?
- ❖ What desires of our old nature are difficult to fight against?
- ❖ When have you noticed a conflict inside yourself about what action you should take? How does this conflict affect you?
- ❖ Think about Biblical examples of people who accomplished much for God but occasionally succumbed to their sinful nature. Who were they? What struggle did they have?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **The Battle of Flesh and Spirit.** Every Christian has two opposing capacities dwelling within them – the capacity to do good, and the capacity for evil. We have our old nature which is passing away and our new nature which is coming to life. Unbelievers do not have the same battle – while they are capable of good deeds, they do not have the capacity for godliness and holiness without a change in their heart that results in our new Christ-like nature. The Bible refers to the remainder of our old nature as the flesh (our sinful self), and the source of our new nature as the Spirit (the nature of God within us).
- ❖ **The Flesh:** The term flesh refers to both our physical bodies and our sinful desires that stem from being human. As long as we are alive, we will struggle against sin.
 - “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” John 3:6.
 - “Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires” Ephesians 4:22.
 - “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” Romans 8:8.
 - “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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit” Romans 8:5.
- ❖ **The Spirit:** When you become a Christian the flesh still remains but the Spirit is in you also. God comes into us and begins to change our heart and our minds so that we can love the things God loves and desire godliness. This Spirit comes from God and gives life to a new self which is capable of holiness and godliness.
 - “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” Galatians 5:16.
 - “And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” Ephesians 4:24.
 - “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” 2 Peter 1:3-4.
- ❖ **The Battle:** The battle inside exists because our old nature is selfish and resists the Spirit. If Christians allow themselves to live by the flesh, they cannot please God (Ephesians 2:3). Romans 7 explain that there is nothing good in our old nature. When the Holy Spirit comes into a believer's life, the ways of the flesh become even more evident because the Holy Spirit highlights these things and guides u in a better direction.
 - “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” Romans 13:14.



- “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God” 1 John 3:9.
- One must actively choose to participate either in the flesh or in the spirit. We choose which nature has control of us! There is no way to entirely escape the flesh, but there is a way to overcome the sinful desires of the flesh through the help of the Holy Spirit.
- The renewing of our new nature and the fight against sin is a life-long process but the difference is we are free from the total power of sin and are free to live for God!

DISCUSSION

- ❖ What are some practical ways you can feed the Spirit of God within you? What are some ways people feed their evil or fleshly self?
- ❖ How does the Holy Spirit help us to war against our flesh and choose godly things?
- ❖ Why is it not possible to be perfect on mere human strength alone? Is there any Biblical evidence for people achieving perfect behaviour apart from God’s help?
- ❖ Name some situations in which it would be important for you to let the Spirit of God take control. How can we allow this to happen?
- ❖ Talk about a moment in your life when you were struggling with these two natures. What did you do?

PRAYER

Close with Prayer. Thank God for His Holy Spirit which is at work in each one of us. Pray that participants would be sensitive to the prodding of the Spirit and the voice of God this week, and obey the Spirit of God within them rather than their fleshly desires. Pray that as the participants abide in the Word of God and remain in the fellowship of other believers, they would be encouraged to fight against temptation and their evil nature and become conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.