

**Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Growth
Week 5 – The Sinful Nature**

Overview

- God's will for our lives is fruitfulness
- Biblical Definition of Sin & Terminology
- Discovering our Sinful Nature
 - Temperaments
 - Close Relationships
 - The World System

Introduction

God's will for our lives is fruitfulness (John 15:5,8)—to become ever more effective in impacting *others* with the life, love and truth of Christ (God's will is *not* just my own healing, happiness, etc.). This occurs as we cooperate with God and allow him to transform our character. But this involves accepting several surprising truths that you may not want to hear.

1. The primary cause of your lack of fruitfulness is YOU

Christians can often identify people or circumstances that impede their spiritual growth. But there are other obstacles to maturity we tend to overlook...

(Watchman Nee) "Anyone who serves God will discover sooner or later that the great hindrance to his work is not others but himself . . . "¹

(Watchman Nee) "If you have a very clumsy servant and he just sits still and does nothing, then his clumsiness does not appear. If he does nothing all day he will be of little use to you, it is true, but at least he will do no damage that way. But if you say to him: "Now come along, don't idle away your time: get up and do something," then immediately the trouble begins. He knocks the chair over as he gets up, stumbles over a footstool a few paces further on, then smashes some precious dish as soon as he handles it. If you make no demands upon him his clumsiness is never noticed, but as soon as you ask him to do anything his awkwardness is apparent at once. The demands were all right, but the man was all wrong. He was as clumsy a man when he was sitting still as when he was working, but it was your demands that made manifest the clumsiness which, whether he was active or inactive, all the time were in his make-up.

We are all sinners by nature. If God asks nothing of us, all seems to go well, but as soon as he demands something of us, the occasion is provided for a grand display of our sinfulness. The Law makes our weakness manifest. While you let me sit still I appear to be all right, but when you ask me to do anything I am sure to spoil it, and if you trust me with a second thing I will as surely

¹ Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit* (Cloverdale, Indiana: Sure Foundation Publishers, 1965), p. 9.

spoil that also. When a holy law is applied to a sinful, man, then it is that his sinfulness comes out in full display.

God knows who I am: he knows that from head to foot I am full of sin; he knows that I am weakness incarnate; that I can do nothing. The trouble is that I do not know it [last week's topic: [our new identity](#)]. I admit that all men are sinners, and that therefore I am a sinner; but I imagine that I am not such a hopeless sinner as some. God must bring us all to the place where we see that we are utterly weak and helpless. While we say so, we do not wholly believe it, and God has to do something to convince us of the fact.”²

Therefore, if you want to be deeply fruitful, you're going to need to develop an appreciation for just how deeply sinful you really are.

2. Your sin involves more than isolated acts of disobedience

The biblical view of sin includes attitudes, motives, and subtle behavioral habits as well as isolated acts of disobedience. See Mark 7:21-23; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:26-5:4; Col. 3:5. Note how Jesus and Paul mix the internal attitudes in with the external actions. The emphasis is on the internal change.

(Mark. 7:21,22) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, (22) deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

(Richard Lovelace) "Today's non-Christians, encouraged by popular psychology which accentuate positive thinking and self-acceptance, think of themselves as fundamentally good people trying to do the right thing, but missing the mark occasionally . . . Many Christians also are inclined to think that sin is a rare exception in their lives. They define it as occasional acts of willful disobedience to known laws of God, such as the Ten Commandments. In this definition, sin is reduced to conscious rebellious actions—major transgression with serious consequences . . . it is obvious that this view screens out most of the serious sin in our lives. In concentrating on actions, we uncover only the tip of the iceberg. Overlooked are our sinful attitudes, the continuing resistance to God's will which give rise to actions. Biblical definitions of sin give much more prominence to attitudes or continuous patterns of behavior than to isolated acts.”³

3. Mature Christians have a growing awareness of their sinfulness

- Healthy, growing Christians experience a strange paradox. On the one hand, we gradually see a definite improvement in our moral lives in many areas. But on the other hand, we realize how much more deeply sinful we are than we initially realized. As we

² Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986), pp. 157,158.

³ Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal As A Way Of Life*, p. 67.

grow, God keeps peeling off layer after layer, revealing new areas and levels of sin. So, although we are making progress, we often feel like we're losing ground!

Consider these **examples**:

Peter's reaction to Christ's miracle. Growing insight into who Jesus is leads to growing awareness of sin.

(Luke 5:4-8) And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; 7 and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Paul's view of himself over time:

The older in Christ Paul becomes, the more disparaging terms he uses to describe himself:

(1 Cor. 15:8-10) And last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (9) For I am *the least of the apostles* and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Note: Paul describing himself as “abnormally born” (*ektrwma*) literally means “a miscarriage, an abortion.”

(Eph. 3:8) To me, *the very least of all saints*, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

(1 Tim. 1:15) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

C.S. Lewis

(Green and Hooper on C.S. Lewis) “Burrowing into his past, he was appalled at what he found... ‘I have found out ludicrous and terrible things about my own character. Sitting by, watching the rising thoughts to break their necks as they pop up, one learns to know the sort of

thoughts that do come. And, will you believe it, one out of every three is a thought of self-admiration: when everything else fails, having had its neck broken, up comes the thought "What an admirable fellow I am to have broken their necks!" I catch myself posturing before the mirror, so to speak, all day long. I pretend I am carefully thinking out what to say to the next pupil (for his good, of course) and then suddenly realize I am really thinking how frightfully clever I'm going to be and how he will admire me.... when you force yourself to stop it, you admire yourself for doing that. It's like fighting the hydra... There seems to be no end to it. Depth under depth of self-love and self-admiration... *Pride...is the mother of all sins, and the original sin of Lucifer.*"⁴

- It is normal and healthy to experience this internal conflict between God's Spirit and your sinful nature. In fact, as you become you more mature, you will be aware of this struggle more and more. This is not a sign of spiritual sickness, but of spiritual health.

(Gal. 5:17*) 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.

What does it mean if we can't identify any struggle with our sinful nature lately?

Isn't a growing awareness of sin a negative and unhealthy way to view yourself?

(Richard Lovelace) "Christians whose spiritual lives are grounded and nurtured *only* on self-esteem and positive thinking, without a vision of the depth of sin, are going to be lacking in depth, reality and humility . . . If we cannot face the bad news about the depth of sin . . . we cannot fully grasp the good news of salvation and the transformed life in Christ . . . Christians who are sensitive to the depth of their own sin are a lot easier to be with, because they are not as inclined to be judgmental."⁵

People who subscribe to a therapeutic view of life tend to locate the source of their problems outside themselves.

e.g. "I'm an angry person because my parents mistreated me"

e.g. "I'm a negative bitter person because my husband is mean to me."

e.g. Disease-model addiction ("My obesity is not a sin; it is a sickness").

If we can't own our sin and shortcomings we won't see the need to receive God's grace and forgiveness. This is why persons who subscribe to a "therapeutic" view of life often show an inadequate appreciation of God's righteousness and grace. The therapeutic view and the biblical view are not complementary—they are

⁴ Green and Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*. p. 105.

⁵ Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal As A Way Of Life*(Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), p. 70.

antithetical! Failing to come to terms with real shortcomings and sin in our lives is ultimately a negation of God's grace.

Therefore:

1. *No matter how sinful you think you are...you are worse.*
2. *No matter how merciful you think God is...He is more merciful.*

If you understand the first truth and miss the second, you will become fatalistic. It is possible to become inappropriately sin focused:

- a. Forgetting your true identity;
- b. Forgetting God's mercy;
- c. Having perfectionistic expectations or impatience about 'getting over' a sin (Gal.5:16-18).

If you understand the second truth and miss the first, you will be superficial, fake, arrogant, self-righteous, self-sufficient and thus comparatively unfruitful. When helping other Christians overcome sin in their life, it is essential to emphasize both of these truths.

Biblical Definition of Sin Nature and Terminology

Definition of Sin Nature: *The deeply ingrained drive to rule our own lives and rebel against God*

Terminology: The Bible uses many terms for our sin nature.

"Flesh"

Gal. 5:17; (NIV translates "sinful nature")

Semantic Range: Each word has a range of meaning, the specific meaning of which must be determined by its immediate context. Paul uses the same word (*sarx*) in different ways: physical body (Gal. 2:20), human accomplishment (Phil. 3:4)—and sinful nature.

Col. 2:11 mentions the "removal" (*apekdusis*) of the flesh (NASB). This word can also have the meaning "disarmed"—and the verbal form of it is translated this way Col. 2:15.

"Body of sin"

(Rom. 6:6) . . . knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin . . .

"The body of the flesh" - It is somehow connected to our physical bodies.

(Col. 2:11) . . . and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ . . .

"The sin which indwells me"

(ROM 7:7-25) - It is deeply ingrained and internal.

(ROM 7:17,20) So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me . . . (20) But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

"Heart" - It is deeply deceptive; only God can truly expose it to us.

(Jer. 17:9) The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart . . .

"Outer man" - (2 Cor. 4:7-18; more on this later)

(2 Cor. 4:7,16) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves . . . Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

Remember: The "old self" (Rom. 6:6) is *not* the same as sin nature ("the body of sin"). "Old self" is our old legal identity in Adam which is "crucified" (gone) for Christians.

Remember: Our sin nature ("the body of sin") is "deposed, but not destroyed" (Review Rom. 6:6). Though no longer in authority over us, it still exists (until glorification) and is active and can enslave us if we submit to it (Rom. 6:16).

Other Definitions:

(John Owen) "It adheres as a depraved principle (in) our minds (as) darkness and vanity; (in) our affections (as) sensuality; (in) our wills (as) loathing of and aversion from what is good; and is constantly putting itself on us (through) inclinations, motions, or suggestions to evil . . . (it) is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet . . ."⁶

(J. I. Packer) "... a perverted energy within people which enslaves them to God-defying, self-gratifying behavior, and by distraction, deceit and direct opposition weakens and overthrows their purposes of righteousness. (It is) the moral equivalent of a wolf in sheep's clothing, presenting itself to us again and again as good, desirable and a necessity of life, thereby corrupting our conscience so that we lose the sense of its guiltiness and cherish it as if it were a friend rather than an enemy."⁷

(Richard Lovelace) "... the structure of sin in the human personality is far more complicated than the isolated acts and thoughts of deliberate disobedience commonly designated in the world. In its biblical definition, sin cannot be limited to isolated instances or patterns of wrongdoing; it is something much more akin to the psychological term complex: an organic

⁶ John Owen, *Sin and Temptation*, p. xx,xxi.

⁷ J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1992), p. 107.

network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs, and behavior deeply rooted in alienation from God. Sin originated in the darkening of the human mind and heart as man turned from the truth about God to embrace a lie about him and consequently a whole universe of lies about his creation. Sinful thoughts, words and deeds flow forth from this darkened heart automatically and compulsively, as water from a polluted fountain.”⁸

(Larry Crabb) “Many pastors preach an ‘iceberg’ view of sin. All they worry about is what is visible above the water line. Like a naive sea captain steering his vessel around the tip of the iceberg with no awareness that there is a mountain of ice beneath the surface that could wreck his ship, Christian (leaders) are too often satisfied when their people turn from church-defined sins of behavior.”⁹

(Charles Spurgeon) “In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome [1215AD], a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once in a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter heaven, since, besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins, which are as truly sins as those which we lament, but which are secret, and come not beneath our eyes...The transgressions which we see and confess are but like the farmer's small samples which he brings to the market, when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those which are hidden from ourselves and unseen by our fellow-creatures.”¹⁰

Discovering our Sinful Nature

The sin nature is deceptive. How can we discover how it works in our lives? Three areas will help: temperaments, close relationships, and something the Bible calls “the world system.”

Area 1: Temperaments

Definition: A collection of personality traits that are exhibited as we respond to various situations in life.

People, though uniquely made, exhibit patterns of behavior, thought, and attitudes that can be generally (not rigidly or stereotypically) grouped together. Hippocrates in the 5th & 4th centuries BC identified these four temperaments: Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, Phlegmatic. Usually people exhibit a mixture of two or more temperaments, one usually

⁸ Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 89.

⁹ Larry Crabb, *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 129.

¹⁰ C.H. Spurgeon. *The Treasury of David* (McLean, : MacDonald Publishing Co.), p. 274.

being dominant. For a useful and interesting discussion of these four temperaments from a Christian perspective, see O. Hallesby, *Temperament and the Christian Faith*.

Trait theorists generally agree that temperament is hereditary:

(Gordon Allport) "The characteristic phenomena of an individual's nature, including his susceptibility to emotional stimulation, his customary strength and speed of response, the quality of his prevailing mood, and all the peculiarities of fluctuation and intensity of mood, these being regarded as dependent on constitutional make-up, and is therefore largely hereditary in origin."¹¹

Several tools have been developed for identifying temperaments and personality types. Two of the best known are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (thinking/ feeling, judging/ perceiving, intuition/ sensing, extrovert/ introvert) and the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (rationals, idealist, artisans, guardians).

Each temperament model has many flaws. But they afford individuals with a good opportunity to reflect on potential areas of strength and weakness.

Warning: Don't use temperaments carelessly:

- Don't use them to *unrighteously categorize someone according to his temperament*. Instead we should use them to identify *potential* areas of strength and weakness. Temperaments are helpful in identifying a person's strengths to be developed, and in identifying and addressing their chronic (besetting) sins.
- Don't use them *insensitively around others who are unfamiliar with the terms*. Good community often does have "in-house" terms that are helpful and efficient, but must be used sensitively.
- Don't use them *with the view that some temperaments are superior/inferior to others*.
- Don't *throw out the use of temperaments just because "it rubs you the wrong way."* Instead, work through your bias against them and learn how to use this in a godly way to help your own growth (so that you can serve others more lovingly), as well as others.

Active Temperaments

Sanguine Strengths	Sanguine Sins	Choleric Strengths	Choleric Sins
Talkative	Poor Listener	Strong-willed	Angry Outbursts
Outgoing	Weak-willed	Determined	Cruel Sarcasm
Enthusiastic	Unstable	Independent	Domineering
Warm	Undisciplined	Optimistic	Inconsiderate
Personable	Restless	Practical	Resists Correction
Friendly	Undependable	Productive	Self-sufficient
Compassionate	Exaggerates	Decisive	Cold

¹¹ G. W. Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961). p. 34.

Carefree	Fearful	Leader	Manipulative
		Confident	Messiah Complex

Reflective Temperaments

Melancholy Strengths	Melancholy Sins	Phlegmatic Strengths	Phlegmatic Sins
Creative	Unhappily self-centered	Calm	Stingy
Analytical	Moody	Easy-Going	Fearful
Deep Emotions	Negative	Dependable	Indecisive
Perfectionist	Theoretical/Impractical	Efficient	Spectator
Artistic	Unsociable	Conservative	Self-Protective
Idealistic	Critical	Practical	Lazy
Loyal	Vengeful	Diplomat	Self-Righteous
Sincere	Rigid	Dry Humor	Traitors

- *Appreciate temperamental diversity.* In some areas, we are simply not as strong as someone more temperamentally suited (e.g., the melancholic will never be as effusive as the sanguine; the phlegmatic will never be as visionary as the choleric, etc.). Nevertheless we can and should make substantial progress in areas of temperamental weakness. Don't envy other's temperamental strength, but accept and embrace God-given diversity in one another—much like spiritual gifts.
- **Besetting sins (deeply ingrained sin habits) often run along temperamental lines.** Since we are totally depraved, our temperaments have been corrupted by the fall. e.g. the melancholic's critical spirit; the choleric's aversion to apologize; the phlegmatic's laziness; the sanguine's lack of self-discipline.
- *Don't use temperaments to rationalize your sin.* Paul says we are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:6). But we often convince ourselves, "That's just the way I am! That's just my personality." Our tendency is to rationalize these besetting sins as amoral.

When we hold them up to the light (God's love that we are called to express), we see plenty of need for God's sanctifying grace. These are the areas, as they come under God's discipline and grace, that revolutionize our relationships and ministry.

Put yourself and others under grace—not to excuse but to acknowledge change in these areas will come gradually. A good sign of this is your ability to poke fun at yourself and allow others to do as well, especially in temperamental sins. The power of sin is diffused when you and others know what it is. It is out on the table and God's grace covers it. Put others under grace with forbearance because they also will only change gradually.

Area 2: Close Relationships

Relationships like marriage, roommates (promote ministry houses), people that we serve with bring our sinful nature to the surface (remember the "clumsy servant")! Deep and consistent involvement in the Body of Christ allows us to develop close relationships. If we stay aloof from relationships and hold people at arms length, we will never get a good look at how sinful we are, and sadly, never get a clear look at God's grace, the very thing we claim we want most.

The great temptation, of course, is to focus on how others fail to love us properly. God's way, however, is to have us look primarily at the "log in our own eye" (Matt. 7:3-5). If we do this, we will continue to grow regardless of how people treat us, and we will eventually have much better relationships!

(Matthew 7:3-5) And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? (4) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? (5) You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

When it comes to relationships, instead of trying to "Find the right person," we need to try to "Become the right person." Many singles need to think this through as all too often they make the mistake of focusing on finding the right person.

Once we adopt this focus, we will begin to see certain areas of our sinful nature. Let's consider a few common examples of sin issues that come to light especially in close relationships.

(Note to the instructor: You may want to ask students to describe how some of these manifestations of our sin nature negatively impact our close relationships.)

A. Anger & Bitterness

(Eph. 4:26,31) Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger . . .(31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

What does it look like to be angry and yet not sin?

Righteous Anger	Unrighteous Anger
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God's purpose has been violated	Your selfish demands/ wanting to "get your way"
Under control	"spewing"/ "venting"
For their good	To pay them back

Our culture teaches it is healthy to "vent" anger. The Bible teaches that this way of handling our anger is foolish and destructive. (FULL BLADDER vs. Prov. 17:14).

Placing unrighteous demands and expectations on others is idolatry and should be replaced with turning to God to meet our needs.

Unrighteous anger takes on various forms: silent treatment, rages, sarcastic cuts, etc.

B. Critical Spirit

(Eph. 4:2,3) . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, (3) being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We see this in the fault-finder who is quick to notice and point out others mistakes & sins, often without redemptive suggestions; judges motives. Predominant feedback you give people is when they do something wrong versus when they do things right.

Parents should reflect on the tone of their relationship with their kids.

C. Envy & Jealousy

(James 3:14,15) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

Constant comparison with others; glad when they fail & mad when they succeed.

D. Being Inconsiderate & Insensitive

(Titus 3:2,3) . . . to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

Doesn't focus on others in conversation because of being preoccupied (thinks of things before people); don't respect others' property or rights; justify their actions based on pragmatic considerations—no matter how it affects people.

E. Hyper-sensitive

(Prov. 19:11) A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

(Prov. 12:16) A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

e.g. Being thin-skinned, overreact to correction, kidding, etc. By always protecting our kids from disappointment and helping them win every battle, we teach them to be thin skinned. Our overprotection leaves them under-prepared to handle frustration and failure.

F. Ungodly Controlling

(Luke 10:38-42) Now as they were traveling along, he entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. (39) And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at his feet. (40) But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." (41) But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; (42) but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

e.g. This person treats amoral areas as moral, like how to pack the trunk for trip, or the right way to do dishes.

What do we communicate to people when we are over controlling?

G. Autonomy

(Prov. 18:1) He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.

(Prov. 12:15) The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Making decisions without asking advice or not considering the counsel given, considering how our decisions will affect others, doing Christian work without asking for the help of others (possibly even seeing it as an invasion of your territory), etc.

How does autonomy affect the people around us?

H. Omission

(James 4:17) Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

We typically see sin as something we DO—not something we FAIL to do. Yet failing to serve others in relationships in areas of legitimate need is clearly wrong (1 Jn 3:17).

A pattern of passivity or laziness in a close relationship is always damaging.

It is common for men to see functional needs of wives, but neglect emotional things. Our culture is weak in teaching this, but that's no excuse for our failure.

A hint that I am struggling with omission is regular comparison with others, particularly committers ("I am glad I don't do what they do.").

Although we all struggle with not fulfilling our full potential, the ommitter is more likely to be satisfied with where they are rather than coming out of their comfort zone. Omitters should periodically ask themselves, when was the last time I initiated encouragement, correction, or vulnerability.

We need to be aware of these, admit them to people we are in relationships with (even take some kidding about them), give them the "green light" to bust us when we're doing them—and then respond when they do!!!

Area 3: The World System

The world system (kosmos) is another avenue through which we discover our sinful nature. It is a satanically-designed system of perverted values that stimulate our sinful nature. This system of values seduces people from ever coming to a relationship with Christ and Christians from seriously pursuing Christian work.

Definition: The system of values used by Satan to stimulate our sinful nature and blocks people from coming to Christ or serving him.

The values of the kosmos are opposed to God's and often entice our sin nature into pursuing goals which are contrary to God's. We gravitate towards some of these values more than others. If we look honestly at the three areas of the world's values that John speaks to (materialism, hedonism, egotism—1 Jn. 2:15,16), often we will experience God convicting us that we are not committed to his values.

Key Components of the Kosmos (from 1 John 2:15,16):

(1 John 2:15,16) Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The kosmos takes areas that are potentially good, but twists them into idols that distract us from coming to Christ and/or neutralize us as Christians. These are the "things of the world" mentioned in vs 15.

"Lust of flesh" (Hedonism):

Definition: *inordinate desire for physical pleasure*

There is nothing wrong with physical pleasure in itself. God gave us bodies with the capacity for enjoying pleasure.

The "lust of the flesh" is the inordinate desire for physical pleasure. **It includes not only obvious things like drug and alcohol abuse, sexual perversion, etc.—but also comfort (indolence as higher priorities than serving Christ), gluttony.**

"Lust of eye" (Materialism):

Definition: *inordinate desire for things*

"Lust of the eye" refers to inordinately desiring things that our eyes see (see **Achan in Josh. 7:21**). **There is nothing wrong with owning and even enjoying material objects. But this easily becomes a form of idolatry so that we derive our sense of meaning, significance, security, etc. from owning and enjoying them.**

Materialism includes not just wealthy big spenders. It also is a crucial part of the American dream (see Luke 12:13-34 or Francis Schaeffer on "personal peace and affluence").

We do not need to have a lot of possessions to be materialistic, materialism is a mindset. We find ourselves consumed with thoughts of wanting more rather than considering how thankful we are for what we have and how we can use our resources to serve others.

Remember that materialism is competitive for many. It's not important to have a nice car, but to have a "nicer" one than the next guy. For others, it is the pursuit of comfortable living (the absence of material suffering) that drives it.

"Boastful pride of life" (Egotism)

Definition: *inordinate desire for the praises of men*

There is nothing wrong with having a healthy sense of self, knowing that you are a significant person who can accomplish valuable goals and impact others. But Satan twists this into something very different (Lamech in Gen. 4:19-24).

As Christians we are significant because we are forgiven, adopted and gifted by God. Instead of living based on these realities, we try to attain significance based on other humans' approval.

- e.g. Corporate ladder-climbing to make a name for yourself.
- e.g. Self-important sports celebrities
- e.g. Craving and demanding respect from others.
- e.g. Feeling inadequate because of station in life or occupation (stay at home mom, low income wage earner, etc).

When we are into the boastful pride of life, we are enslaved to the opinions of others. Do you want the final verdict on your life to be, "People really admired me?"

The more we pursue these areas, the less true fulfillment we experience. Increased investment results in ever diminishing returns. The only way out is to reject what world says is fulfilling (lies) and pursue what matters to God.

For a more thorough treatment of this subject, see our notes from Christian Ministry: [Satanology: Covert Tactics and Response](#).

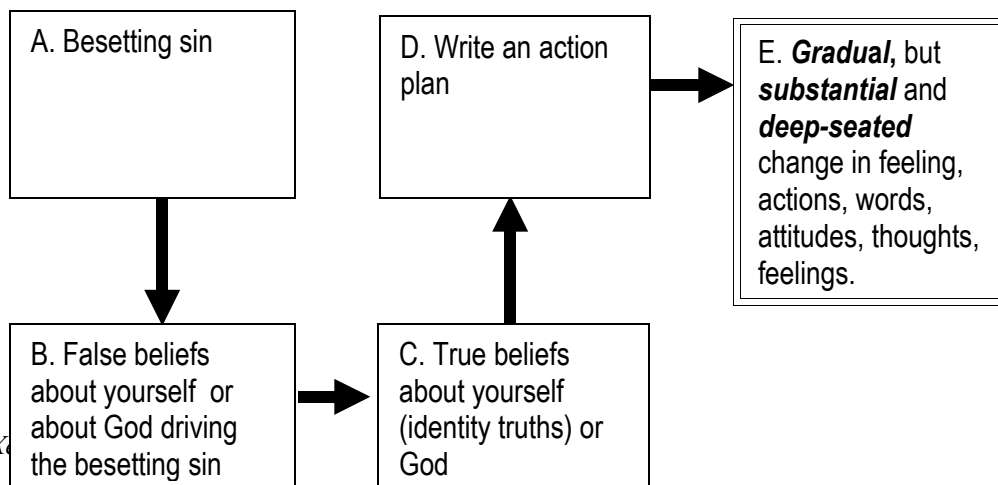
Cooperating With God

If you want to be more effective for the Lord in ministry ("useful to the master"), you must cooperate with him in your sanctification!

(2 Tim. 2:19-22) Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." (20) Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. (21) Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (22) Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.**

But remember that that a deepening awareness of your sinful nature is normal and a sign of health (Gal. 5:17*). Manage your expectations!

Overcoming a Besetting Sin:



Box A: Identify your "besetting sins" by praying for insight (Ps. 139:23,24), reviewing temperament weaknesses, and asking Christians who know you well (are you ready to listen?). See Unit 3 "Encouragement and Admonition".

Box B: Ask God to reveal to you the lies you believe that drive your besetting sins. Sample lies might include:

- e.g. All that exists is what I can see and feel.
- e.g. The person I want to be with can meet all of my needs.
- e.g. I will be fulfilled to the degree that I get what I want for myself.
- e.g. I am successful when the people in my life approve of what I do.

Box C: Prayerfully reflect on and thank God for what he says is true. This should include an identity truth (what he says is true of you). You might also include a promise (what God says he will do), or an aspect of God's character (he is loving, compassionate, just, etc.) or God's perspective on life (this world is passing away, Jesus will return, etc.). Focus specifically on truths that combat the lies that drive your besetting sin. This will help you deal with the root problem behind many of your symptoms.

Box D: Write an action plan which may include:

1. Things to stop doing (resist) and things to start doing (replace)
2. Passage(s) to memorize and reflect on.
3. Books to read?

Don't forget that the power of sin over your life is greatly reduced when you confess your sin to other people (1 John 1:7).

Memory Verses

Gal. 5:17* - It is healthy and normal for Christians to experience a battle between sinful nature and Spirit.

2 Tim. 2:19-21** - There is an intimate connection between our personal sanctification and our effectiveness in God's work.

Assignment

1. Read *Walking in Victory* -- Chapters 7-9.
2. Complete the assignment *Overcoming a Besetting Sin*.
 - **Identity one besetting sin** by reviewing three areas in which the sinful nature reveals itself (temperaments, relationships and the world system.). **Develop a plan for overcoming your besetting sin** as instructed on the handout.
 - If you get stuck on identifying the underlying identity issue, consider using the "Key Aspects of our New Identity" chart from the last class. Look at symptoms of not knowing, considering or presenting and see if your besetting sin is mentioned there.

Week 5 Exam Review Guide

- Be able to define the sin-nature (the deeply ingrained drive to rule our own lives and rebel against God).
- Be able to define “besetting sin” (special areas of vulnerability to sin *or* deeply ingrained sin-habits).
- Be able to define temperament (a collection of personality traits that show up as we respond to situations).