

Hindrances to Spiritual Growth

I. Introduction

No matter how long you have been saved, the flesh is still something that we must be aware of. Galatians 5:16 tells us – "Walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh..." Romans 8:8, 12-13 also teaches us that we must guard against the flesh.

The bottom line is this – the flesh has **gotten**, is **getting**, and will continue to get us into trouble. Why? Because we work so hard to **satisfy** the flesh. So often we yield to the desires of our flesh. When we talk about the desires of the flesh the first thing we usually think about is fornication or adultery. But, how many times does our flesh want to eat what we want to eat, say what we should not say, or think those things that are not like God.

In every Christian's life an ongoing battle exists between yielding to the desires of the flesh and submitting to the will of the Spirit in matters of thoughts, words, and deeds. Sadly enough we sometimes fail to grasp the reality of this conflict and just how crucial it is to gain victories in this area.

Learning to live separated from fleshly desires is fundamental to advancing our spiritual growth and development. Because of this, many Christians who sincerely desire to be used of God suffer deep frustration. Their failure to maintain victory over the desires of their flesh frequently sends them back to "square one" in their walk with God.

The key to victory over the flesh is both attainable and accessible! Philippians 4:13 reminds us, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

II. Hindrances to Spiritual Growth – (Galatians 5:16) – "This say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

By its very nature, focusing on and feeding the flesh and its desires stunts spiritual growth and quickly becomes an all-consuming task. While it expands itself to absorb our time, talents, and energy, it also smothers interest in spiritual matters. The old saying, "the more you pray, the more you want to pray; but the less you pray, the less you want to pray" illustrates the principle of an unrestrained flesh, which is **never satisfied**. When allowed to go unchecked in a Christian's life, the lust of the flesh will continually demand more and more fulfillment until all spirituality is suppressed.

A. Frustration in Doing the Work of God

Any person who tries to accomplish spiritual things while at the same time catering to the desires of the flesh quickly finds himself at the center of a spiritual tug of war. He is constantly pulled one way by his flesh, while the Spirit steadily prods us in the opposite direction. As long as we continue to allow this, he falls short of the challenge to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58)

III. Yielding to the Desires of the Flesh

Left alone, our carnal (fleshly) nature will always sway us to do the works of the flesh. So many Christian women are yielding to the desires of the flesh such as:

- A. Fornication**
- B. Adultery**
- C. Laziness**
- D. Controlling thoughts**
- E. Prayerlessness**
- F. Hatred**
- G. Envy**
- H. Jealousy**
- I. Selfishness**
- J. "Jezebel Spirit"**
- K. "Attitudes"**

IV. Precautions That Relate to Spiritual Growth – I Corinthians 15:33

A. Guard Against Wrong Environments

"Come out from among them and be separate." If you have come out why do you still want to hang out with your old friends and go to the places where we say God has delivered us from? Some people will say, "Oh, I want to show her or him I am saved" or "Oh, I am witnessing to her or him." You don't need to **hang out** to do this. Your old friends will see there has been a change in your life, **if** you let your light shine.

We have to work with the unsaved and sometimes live with the unsaved. But, you have got to show these people that you are **different**. And this does not only mean different in the way you dress.

B. Guard Against Worldliness – II Corinthians 7:1

"Therefore, having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

If you expect to grow you have to rid yourself of all filthiness of the flesh. God has cleansed us and set us free. This means we don't have to **sleep, sit, lay, or crawl** in **SIN**.

This can happen to those of us who have been saved for **10, 20, or 30 years**. The enemy comes along and tempts us, but because we don't have a **prayer life** and a **fast life** and are not **watchful**, the enemy will trick us.

C. Guard Against Worldliness – II Corinthians 7:1

You will not grow if you are always walking and talking with "**negative**" people. Yes, those who talk too much and make the comments that cause you to have "ill feelings" against your Pastor, Women's Auxiliary President, Choir President, and your brothers and sisters in the Lord. This "negative" person can be your husband, son, daughter, best friend, or a sister you are very close to in the church. Brace yourself – you will find negative people in the pulpit, the choir, the brotherhood department, women's department, and in your family.

If you allow these people to **feed into your spirit** with their negative talk your **growth will be stunted**.