**Practicing Living by God’s life in a troubled world**

 **(All verses are from the NIV Bible translation unless otherwise noted)**

**5b) A Christian’s sinful nature can hinder the life of Jesus from being expressed through us. In baseball jargon, our sinful nature has a zero spiritual batting average. Swinging the bat at home plate alone or playing on the other team is not fruitful.**

**What is the sinful nature?**

**The sinful nature is called by a number of names depending on the bible translation. Names commonly used in the bible are flesh, sinful nature, old self, old man, body of sin, carnal, sensual, body of death to name a few.**

 **The Greek word for flesh is sarx. According to Strong’s concordance, the word flesh can refer to the non-sinful aspect of the physical body with its daily needs but often means a negative bent toward sin plus unaided human effort independent of God’s workings including even things that can be respectable which are done apart from faith. Also, flesh implies human origin or empowerment and proceeds out of the unchanged part of us that is not transformed by God.**

**The sinful nature is part of us but not our true identity after receiving Jesus**.

 *Romans 8:9 KJV But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

**The sinful nature has a natural bent toward evil and impedes our desire to do good. The sinful nature has its origin from the fall of mankind.**

*Romans 7:18**For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

**The sinful nature is a part of us that desires to operate independently from God and is opposed to God’s purposes.**

*Romans 8:7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.*

**The sinful nature has characteristics which are the polar opposite of the fruit of the Holy Spirit which is God’s life.** *Galatians 5:22-23*  *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

**The sinful nature is not referring to our physical body itself, personality, natural talents or abilities. Each of us is uniquely designed by God for a specific purpose.** *Ephesians 2:10**For we are God’s* ***handiwork****, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

**What is Jesus’s assessment of our sinful nature?**

**Jesus estimation of a life controlled by the sinful nature is it produces nothing of spiritual value.**

*John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spiritand life.*

**Jesus reflects that the flesh is weak. The word weak means impotent---without strength whatsoever.**

 *Mark 14:38* In the garden of Gethsemane, *Jesus said … the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*

**What are some of the characteristics of the sinful nature?**

**The evil deeds of the sinful nature come from within a person.**

*Mark 7:20-23 He (Jesus) went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder,**adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.**All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”*

*James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?*

**Each person’s sinful nature has a unique blend of sinful lusts.**

 *James 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his* ***own*** *lust, and enticed.*

**The sinful nature exhibits sinful characteristics which characterize the world we live in as listed in the bible verses below. This is a partial list.**

*Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions**and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.*

*1 Timothy 1:9-11 We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine , that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.*

*1 Corinthians 3:3 KJV For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

**What are some common misconceptions by Christians in dealing with the sinful nature?**

**Thinking our sinful nature is really our true identity.** *Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

**Thinking our sinful nature is not as bad as others.** *Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous no not one.*

**Indulging our sinful nature is okay since it seems so natural.** *Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh…*

**Attempting to overcome our sinful nature by human self-determination. Thinking that our sinful nature can be improved over time by human means in order to become more acceptable to God.**

*Romans 7:18-20 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.****20****Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it .*

**Thinking our sinful nature can be totally eradicated over one’s life or is eradicated when you receive Jesus.**

*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Romans 6:6 KJV*

**The word defined as destroyed from the Greek language means to be made of no effect or to be nullified by a stronger power. The sinful nature can be overpowered by the Holy Spirit but the sinful nature is not eradicated.**

**Thinking bible knowledge alone is key for controlling the sinful nature without depending on God’s power to overcome sin.** *John 5:39-40**Jesus said You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,**yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

**Believing harsh treatment of body or adherence to rules/regulations can control the sinful nature.** *Colossians 2:23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

**Thinking doing a lot of good works will offset the evil done by our sinful nature to make us acceptable to God.** *Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

**Why would God leave a Christian with a sinful nature if He wants us to live a Godly life of love and doing good deeds?**

**To convince us we are unable to produce God’s life and works without depending on God to work through us.**

*John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5*

**To force us to rely on God’s presence living in us so we can exhibit His life and power.**

*2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

**To drive us to dependence so that Jesus life would be revealed in us.**

*Philippians 1:20*  …*Christ would be magnified in my body.*

**To help us discover that we are not adequate to live the Christian life by our own power and resources.**

 *2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.*

**To help us be compassionate towards non-believers since we all fail often.**

*1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

**There is a constant internal conflict for the Christian as we try to appropriate God’s life to overcome the pull of the sinful nature.** *1**Peter 2:11* **…***Fleshly lusts wage war against our soul.*

*Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=galatians%205:17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29180a)*] you want.*

 **Practicing Living by God’s life in a troubled world—Sinful Nature Section 5b continued**

**There is a difference between temptation and sin.**

**Jesus was tempted in all points without sin.** *Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

**Jesus in Gethsemane struggling with temptation submitted his will to the Father and was strengthened.** *Luke 22: 42-43**“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”**An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.*

**We are all tempted yet temptation itself is not sin.** *1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptationhas overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

**Temptation/Trials can often be far beyond our ability to handle so we might rely on God instead of ourselves.** *2 Corinthians 1: 8-11 We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.* ***But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.****He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,**as you help us by your prayers.*

**What are the consequences of habitually living by the sinful nature for the Christian?**

**God will allow us to experience the negative result of our own sinful lusts so we might seek repentance.** *Psalm 81:11-12 But my people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would have none of me so I gave them up unto their own hearts lust and they walked in their own devices.*

**We can become enslaved to sinful behavior experiencing bondage and addiction to a sinful lifestyle.** *John 8:34* *Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*

**Our lives may have little or no spiritual influence---righteous Lot’s city was destroyed with his wife turned to pillar of salt and daughters committed incest with him whose descendants were enemies of Israel.**  *2 Peter 2: 6-8* *if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;**and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless.*

**As the above verses imply, there is a biblical reaping and sowing principle.** **There may be unwanted consequences that we are left with due to indulging our sinful nature.**

 *Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.* *Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

**God applies chastening if we live by the sinful nature for the purpose of teaching us to partake in Jesus life and His holiness.**

 *Heb 12:10-11**For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit,* ***that we might be partakers of his holiness.****Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

**God administers discipline in this life so we will not be condemned at the final judgement and to teach us now to judge our sinful nature by submitting it to the power of Holy Spirit.**

*1 Corinthians 11: 30-32 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.****31****For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.****32****But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

**As a good Father, God child trains us but God never fails or forsakes us.** *Psalm 89:30-33* *If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes,* *if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands,**I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging;* *but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.*

**How do we acquire greater success in overcoming the sinful nature? We practice living and drawing off of God’s life which is expressed in different ways but focusing on the same theme of depending by faith upon God’s resources not our own to subdue the sinful nature so God’s life can be released.**

**We can practice living by the power of the Holy Spirit so we won’t complete the lusts of our sinful nature.** *Galatians 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

**We access by faith God’s grace which is God’s life.** *Romans 5:2 we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand…*

**We practice appropriating by faith God’s grace which is the very life of Jesus.** *1 Corinthians 15:10 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.*

**We practice by appropriating by faith the life of Jesus within us.** *Galatians 2:20**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

**We practice by faith putting on Jesus who lives in us and by thinking good things.**  *Romans 13:14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh*

**We practice by faith putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature which reflects Jesus.** *Ephesian 4:22,24* *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; … And put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*

**We can practice the daily denying of the desires of our sinful nature so Jesus’s life can be expressed through us.** *Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.*

**We practice controlling the old nature by yielding it to the Holy Spirit so it can be subdued by God’s power** *Romans 8:13* … *But if ye through the Spirit do mortify(put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live*

**We can pray to be filled by the Holy Spirit which means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.** *Ephesian 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit…*

**We offer ourselves completely to God so He might live through us.** *Romans 12:1Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

**We practice an abiding life of trust so that Jesus’s fruitful life will be manifest in us.** *John 15:4-5* *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* ***5****I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. KJV*

**We are to practice a new way of thinking, cooperating with God through prayer and study of the bible and seeking Him even in our weakness and our failures.**

**We practice setting our mind on things of the Holy Spirit not things of the sinful nature.**

*Romans 8:5-6 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.**The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

**We need to renew our minds and focus on the wisdom God vs the wisdom of the world.** *Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**We need to practice taking even our thoughts captive to Jesus.**

*2 Corinthians 10: 4-5 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.**We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

**We practice fleeing temptation from within us and without by cooperating with God’s grace and power.** *2 Timothy 2:22**Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

**We are to practice praying whenever a need arises.** **A life of dependence on God is a life of prayer.** *1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing*

**As we read the Bible, the promises of God point us to seeking to partake in God’s life since He lives in us.** *2 Peter 1: 3-4 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4****Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature****, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

**God’s power with our willing cooperation can work to better overcome the weakness of our sinful nature.**

*2 Corinthians 12:9* *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” …*

**When we fail by living by the sinful nature then we can confess up when you mess up, appropriate God’s forgiveness and get back to practicing drawing off of God’s life and power.**

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**The above verses point to practicing appropriating God’s life to work through and with us.** *Zechariah 4:6**So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.*

**The independent aspect of our flesh and the flesh’s natural bent to sin is directly opposed to the Holy Spirit working through us. Also, the flesh and the world system provide the source for demonic temptations, footholds and strongholds which can impede the Christian’s spiritual progress of allowing Jesus to be revealed more consistently in our daily lives.**