

Summary

- a) This session examines five hinderances to abiding. If you don't overcome these hinderances, Christ's life can't flow freely like sap from your spirit to organically produce Christlike fruit.
- b) The five hinderances to abiding examined in this session are: (1) natural strength; (2) self-reliance; (3) the rational mind; (4) emotions and experiences; and (5) the body.
- c) The goal of this session is to help you become influenced, led, and governed by the indwelling Spirit alone; to help deliver you from the mixture of the soul and the body influencing, leading, and governing you; and to help you experience synergy between the spirit, soul, and body as Christ lives in you rather than you living.

The Division of Soul and Spirit

- a) Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
- b) The KJV translates it like this: "For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder [dividing to separate] of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
- c) His goal is to reveal the life source you draw from and live by, aiming to shift you from living selfishly to living by Christ's indwelling life in your spirit.
- d) Always remember: If the body of sin rules, then the soul will obey sin; if the soul rules, then the soul will obey self; and if the spirit rules, the soul will obey the Holy Spirit.

Four Expressions of Soul Life

- a) In his book *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee defined four manifestations of soul life. These are:
 - Natural strength;
 - Self-conceit, hard and unyielding toward God;
 - Self-styled wisdom with many opinions and plans;
 - Emotional sensation sought in spiritual experiences.
- b) Summarizing these soulish expressions, Nee stated, "These are due to the fact that the life of the soul is self, which in turn is natural strength, and that the faculties of the soul are will, mind, and emotion."
- c) Let's take a few minutes and look in more detail at these expressions of living by the soul.
- d) If you don't overcome these hinderances, Christ's life can't flow freely like sap from your spirit to organically produce Christlike fruit.

1. Natural Strength

- a) For the soulish Christian, self is at the center of everything they do.
- b) This self-centered living may not even be expressed by what is normally classified as sin. Frequently, it's showcased by trying to live for God by the energy of the soul.

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- c) Unless the Lord reveals your spirit-to-Spirit union with the indwelling Spirit and self-life in your soul, you will inevitably try to serve God by natural strength.
- d) What does this look like?
- You will exert all your energy trying to live for God rather than depending entirely on the Spirit to serve, obey, and follow Christ.
 - You will attempt to keep God's commandments and do God's will by self-willed determination rather than by Spirit reliance.
 - You will apply natural strength, gifting, and creativity to accomplish great things for God rather than waiting on the Lord in prayer for revelation, direction, and instruction from His Word and voice.
 - You might even outwork others with great zeal, not by relying on God's inward grace for enablement, but by exerting the power of your soul.
- e) If we are being honest, most of us, at one time or another, have relied upon our souls' creative ability to do a good work rather than a God work.
- f) Like Abraham who gave birth to Ishmael, we have calculated and crafted a pragmatic plan to help God fulfill His promises. Yet lurking underneath lies self, always trying its best to be good and do good, hijacking the mind, will, and emotions to get what it ultimately wants.
- g) With self at the center, the soulish Christian subtly desires to be seen, noticed, and praised for their righteous acts (see Matt. 6:1).

The Way of Cain

- a) From a human perspective, soulish works are typically deemed good and praiseworthy, vastly different from the defiling sins of the flesh. Yet beneath the hood, self is the engine moving the car forward, driven by human reasoning rather than the Spirit's revelation.
- b) Like Cain of old, the soulish Christian presents to the Lord an offering from the works of their hands. In the words of Jude, they go "the way of Cain" (Jude 1:11).
- c) Even with good intentions, the soulish Christian employs their natural gifts, talents, resources, and intelligence to build a tower reaching to heaven, driven by an inward motive to promote self and receive glory.
- d) Along this line, Watchman Nee said, "God's pleasure or displeasure is not founded upon the principle of good and evil. Rather, God traces the source of all things. An action may be quite correct, yet God inquires, what is its origin? . . . As human beings we distinguish between good works and evil works; God on the other hand goes behind and makes a distinction as to the source of every work."
- e) The life source you choose determines the type of fruit you produce. Living by self-life produces the fruit of the flesh. Living by Christ's life produces the fruit of the Spirit.
- f) Whatever originates from the soul and is executed by the power of the soul can never please the Lord. Only what is communicated by the indwelling Spirit to your spirit, and then carried out by relying on the Spirit's power to energize your soul and body, can please the Lord and produce the fruit of Christ.

2. Self-Reliance

- a) The soulish Christian is independent and self-reliant. They live by what their will insists upon having. What they want, when they want it, and how they want it drives their life. The power of self-assertion and self-determination energizes their soul.
- b) Self-reliance suppresses the Spirit, for it enthrones self and depends upon soul-life for power to carry out God's requirements. Therefore, the soul opposes the Spirit, not only in disobeying the Lord, but even in trying to serve and please Him.
- c) When you are self-reliant rather than Spirit-reliant, you depend upon your natural creativity, gifting, and talent to carry out the Lord's work. Your effort is empowered by your soul's natural energy and strength rather than the Spirit's enabling grace.
- d) Instead of waiting on the Lord in prayer to hear His voice, sense His mind and heart, and discern His direction, you rely upon your own knowledge, wisdom, and will power.
- e) To be clear, when you live by Christ's indwelling life, the Spirit empowers and energizes your gifts, talents, creativity, and personality to do what He desires.
- f) For example, I have zero musical ability. I sing like a dying dog and dance like—well, I can't even clap on beat, so I don't know what you would call it. Because I don't have any musical talent, no matter how filled I am with the Spirit, I could never be a worshiper leader.
- g) My point is the Lord uses your gifts and talents to express His life and execute what He initiates and reveals. But your natural gifts and talents must be submitted to the indwelling Spirit's leadership and used only when the Spirit leads, inspires, and empowers. It must be by the Spirit from beginning to end for Jesus Christ to receive the glory and honor.
- h) One word of caution. What I just said should not lead you into passivity and inactivity. Some try so hard to be Spirit-led they become super spiritual and can't even brush their teeth or use the bathroom without hearing God's audible voice. Of course, I'm being a little sarcastic, but I trust you get my point.
- i) Paul said, "I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).
- j) In the parable of the talents, Jesus exhorted us to multiply the resources, gifts, and influence we have been given to advance His kingdom (see Matt. 25:14-30).
- k) When a person is truly Spirit-led, they will not be passive or inactive. Like Paul, they will work hard and labor relentlessly to preach the gospel and partner with the Spirit to advance the kingdom. But here's the catch . . . this will not be by soul power but by the enabling power of God's inward grace.

Self-Sufficiency

- a) In contrast, Christians who live from the soul are often proud. Their self rather than Christ is at the center.
- b) Believers who live by self-life in the soul are also lukewarm, self-sufficient, and self-satisfied. Living from the soul, they boast, "I am rich . . . and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). Yet they are blinded to the true condition of their heart.
- c) The soulish Christian, in a state of self-sufficiency, is content with their current level of intimacy with the Lord. They are satisfied with their limited understanding of God's Word. They are pleased with their present prayer life. And they are comfortable with partial obedience to God's Word and voice. When evaluating their spiritual life, the self-satisfied believer says it "is good enough" (Luke 5:39).

- d) What's the common denominator between self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency? It's self—the love of self. And this self-life is energized when you choose to live from the soul rather than the indwelling life of Christ.
- e) If you live by self-life in your soul, it will hinder Christ's life from flowing freely from your spirit. Selfishness suppresses the Spirit while selflessness releases the Spirit.

3. The Rational Mind

- a) Not only are soulish believers self-reliant, living by natural strength, they also are led, governed, and empowered by their rational mind.
- b) The mind is essential to fully experiencing Christ's indwelling life. But the mind makes a terrible leader. The Lord designed your mind to serve your spirit. The spirit was never meant to be governed by the rational mind.
- c) If you live by self-life in your soul, you will be led by what your mind calculates, logic dictates, and your thoughts speculate.
- d) You might even enjoy arguing and debating, holding dogmatically to your unbendable views.
- e) But knowing truth mentally is not synonymous with possessing life experientially. Knowing truth in your head is not equivalent to knowing God in your heart.
- f) Perhaps you are on a quest to acquire knowledge, falsely believing intelligence rather than life is the pinnacle of the Christian experience. Like the Pharisees of old, you search the Scriptures, always reading and studying, but never coming to the person of Christ for life (see John 5:39-40).
- g) Keep in mind the most brilliant Bible scholars, who memorized entire chapters of the Torah, were responsible for crucifying the One to whom these Scriptures pointed.
- h) If you have prioritized knowledge above experiential life, please don't stop reading and studying the Word. Keep up this discipline day and night but with one change. Instead of making knowledge your ultimate goal, which can easily lead to pride, arrogance, criticism, and judgment, make knowing the Lord your number one priority (see 1 Cor. 8:1).
- i) Spend time in the Word because you are hungry and thirsty to cultivate a deeply personal relationship with Christ.
- j) Develop an appetite for experiential life not just mental knowledge. Become a doer of the Word rather than a hearer only.

Governed By the Rational Mind

- a) The soulish Christian, still living by the tree of knowledge, believes cultivating the mind is the goal of Christianity.
- b) Rather than relying on God's revelation in their spirit's intuition, the soulish Christian prizes intelligence above obedience to the internal promptings of the Spirit. They depend on reasoning rather than revelation.
- c) Though born of the Spirit, the soulish Christian, who is governed by their rational mind, is hindered from knowing God in a deep way.
- d) Why? Since God is Spirit, it's only through your spirit you can know, experience, and encounter the Spirit of God, who communicates with your spirit to Spirit (see 1 Cor. 2:10-13).

- e) The soulish Christian, living from their rational mind, is impeded from spirit-to-Spirit communion with the Lord and is therefore limited from knowing God in a personal way.
- f) Please don't misunderstand what I am saying. You are to love the Lord "with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). Being a charismatic Christian for over twenty-five years, I have seen my fair share of people falsely claiming the Spirit led them to do something they clearly didn't think through from beginning to end. This never ends well.
- g) I am not at all discounting intelligence, for the mind and the brain are invaluable when fully yielded to the indwelling Spirit.
- h) I am stressing the importance of the Spirit leading rather than the mind leading. I am emphasizing the mind is meant to serve your spirit, processing, evaluating, and aligning with the indwelling Spirit's voice, direction, and revelation.
- i) The mind is essential to fully experiencing Christ's indwelling life. But the mind makes a terrible leader. The Lord designed your mind to serve your spirit. The spirit was never meant to be governed by the rational mind.
- j) Of course, you should seek sound biblical interpretation, using your mind to read, analyze, and study. Certainly, you should use your mind to gain knowledge of Scripture, for this is how revelation knowledge, which reveals Christ and instructs you how to live in a relationship with Him, is often received. As a teacher of God's Word, I know how vital the mind is to receiving revelation knowledge.
- k) So, to be clear, I am stressing the importance of experiential life above mental knowledge. But I am in no way undervaluing intelligence.

Emotions and Experiences

- a) The Lord designed your emotions to serve your spirit. The spirit was never meant to be governed by your emotions. The issue is whether your emotions are leading or your spirit is leading. The emotions are essential to fully experience Christ's indwelling life. But the emotions make a terrible leader.
- b) If you are more emotional than rational, your feelings dictate what you believe. One minute you're excited and happy. The next minute you're despondent and sad.
- c) You are like a rollercoaster, fluctuating between emotional highs and emotional lows.
- d) If you live on a steady diet of feelings, you can become overly sensitive. You might even begin to perceive everything said and done is aimed directly at you.
- e) When your emotions govern you, it won't take much for you to feel angry, hurt, offended, or rejected.
- f) You will also be vulnerable to discouragement, often tempted to quit.
- g) Furthermore, you will only serve and obey the Lord when you feel like it.
- h) If I am describing you, remember . . . you walk by faith not by feelings (see 2 Cor. 5:7).

Living By Faith, Not by Feelings

- a) Don't allow your feelings to dictate what you believe. This will make you unstable and double minded.
- b) Before I knew my spirit was inseparably joined to the indwelling Spirit, I always used to say *I feel so far from the Lord. I feel dead and dry. I feel disconnected from Christ.*

- c) After I learned the revolutionary truth of my spirit-to-Spirit connection with the Lord, I realized these were just feelings in my soul. Feelings that were lying to me.
- d) The truth is I literally could not be closer to the Lord than having His Spirit grafted to my spirit. I have learned these feelings are a clear indication I'm living from my soul rather than my spirit.
- e) These feelings are like your car's dashboard indicating what's happening with the things you can't see. Whereas a car's dashboard informs you of the condition of the engine and whether it needs more gas, feelings highlight what life source you are presently drawing from—whether self-life in your soul or Christ's indwelling life in your spirit.
- f) When you feel dead, dry, and disconnected, this is a clear indication your soul is influencing you rather than your spirit. Though you might feel dead, dry, and disconnected, the truth is your spirit is a direct pipeline to Christ's uncreated, indestructible, overcoming life.
- g) Whenever you say things like, "I feel a million miles from the Lord" or "I feel dead and dry," you are basically saying, "My soul presently has dominion over my spirit. My feelings are ruling and blinding me to the truth of my spiritual union with Christ."
- h) Whether or not you feel connected to Christ, the truth remains: You are one spirit with Him (see 1 Cor. 6:17).
- i) Stop allowing your emotions to muddy the clear water of truth—the Spirit of Christ has been grafted to your spirit.
- j) To live by Christ's indwelling life, I had to learn to silence my feelings, which seemed to always tell me you are far from God. When tempted to agree with my emotions and voice this confession, I try to remember the truth. I am already one with Him.

Spiritual Experiences

- a) When a Christian is governed by their emotions and frequently feels far from God, they usually rely upon spiritual experiences. This is especially true in the charismatic stream of the church.
- b) When a Christian is governed by their emotions, they shed many tears as they feel God's Spirit moving. They express their joy with praises, shouts, and halleluiahs—all of which are good and scriptural. But if you dissect and analyze their motive, they are often not seeking the Lord Himself. They are pursuing the feelings that come from experiencing Him. They seek a dopamine rush, a spiritual euphoria, rather than a steady, inward, spiritual relationship with the Lord, which may or may not include such encounters.
- c) If this describes you, it's easy to exchange knowing the Lord deeply through inward revelation by His Spirit and Word for sensations and emotional highs, which often are the result from encounters, manifestations, dreams, and visions—all of which I am one hundred percent in favor of. I am just stressing these encounters must come out of your personal relationship with the Lord and can't become your main pursuit.
- d) If your emotions govern you, it's easy to equate maturity with experiencing joy in the Lord's presence.
- e) But you must remember maturity is determined by the formation of Christ in you and obedience to His Word and voice. It's not a byproduct of experiencing euphoria and sensations from spiritual encounters.
- f) If you live by emotional highs from spiritual encounters, how will you respond if God's tangible, external presence is withdrawn for a season? Most likely, you will believe God has disappeared, you are being judged, or God is mad at you.

- g) If you want to live by Christ's indwelling life, you must realize His life never dissipates or wanes within your spirit.
- h) Even if you go through seasons where you don't encounter Him through dreams, visions, or His tangible external presence, He is still grafted to your spirit. Since you live by faith and not by feeling, when the external seems to dry up for a season, put your roots down deep into your spirit, where Christ dwells, and draw from His life within you.
- i) The Lord designed your emotions to serve your spirit. The spirit was never meant to be governed by your emotions. The issue is whether your emotions are leading or your spirit is leading. The emotions are essential to fully experience Christ's indwelling life. But the emotions make a terrible leader.

5. The Body

- a) The Lord designed your body to serve your spirit. The spirit was never meant to be governed by your body. The issue is whether your body is leading or your spirit is leading. The body is essential to fully experiencing Christ's indwelling life. But the body makes a terrible leader.
- b) If your soul influences, leads, and governs you, the corrupt and crooked lusts of the body can easily dominate you, imprisoning your spirit.
- c) If this happens, the soul and body, coupled together, naturally produce the works of the flesh, which are "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal. 5:19-21).
- d) If you analyze these works of the flesh, you realize some are lusts of the human body—such as immorality, impurity, sensuality, sorcery, drunkenness, and carousing—while others are activities of the soul—such as jealousy and envy. The remaining are works of the soul and body coupled together, such as idolatry, enmities, strife, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, and factions.
- e) Paul said our bodies are "a natural body" (1 Cor. 15:44). The Greek word for natural is *psychikos*, and as you saw earlier when I expounded upon 1 Corinthians 2:14, means "belonging to the psuche, soul."
- f) This means your body operates from the direct input it receives from the soul. The Lord designed your body to operate in unison with your soul.
- g) He created you so your spirit would be the leader, your soul the processor, expressor, and executor, and your body the servant. But because of the fall, unless you're born again and allow the Spirit to lead, the body's lustful passions work together with the soul's rationalizations, emotions, and self-will to produce the flesh, which is corrupted beyond repair, dominated by defiling lusts, and ruled by rebellious inclinations.
- h) When speaking about the flesh, Scripture is clear: God looks at the flesh as utterly corrupt and unable to please Him.
- i) No amount of education, morality, religion, legislation, or cultural-accepted ideologies can transform the flesh. Nothing can refine or reform the flesh.
- j) Not even the all-powerful God, who created the heavens and the earth, can alter the flesh. It has been divinely consigned to wrath and judgment. The flesh was either paid for on the cross for those in Christ or will be paid for in hell for those in Adam.
- k) The flesh is hostile to God, unable to please Him, incapable of obeying God's commandments, and is permeated with death (see Rom. 8:6-8).

- l) Knowing the utter corruption of the flesh, God's only solution is to impart His dead-raising, universe-creating life into our spirits and to put our flesh to death by the Spirit applying the cross to self-life in our souls.

Governed by the Flesh

- a) If you choose to live by the soul, realize the soul's nature is to live for self and is drawn like a magnet to the fallen body's innate desire to sin.
- b) When self is your life source, the sin inherent within your unredeemed body eventually determines how you live. And the soul, when it's hypnotized by the body's corrupted desires, furnishes the strength and energy to sin.
- c) If you allow sin in your body to reign, your soul will be enticed by sin and use its will to obey sin's desires.
- d) The carnal Christian is ruled by their flesh. They are governed by their unredeemed body coupled together with their unrenewed soul. The carnal Christian is powerless against the corrupt desires in their body acting upon their soul's mind, will, and emotions.
- e) What they do and live for is driven by the outside in. Their appetite for food, comfort, sex, sensual desires, and worldly pleasures rules them.
- f) Though born of the Spirit, a carnal Christian lives by the dictates of their sensual cravings working in synergy with their thoughts, feelings, and choices.
- g) The carnal Christian permits the physical senses of their body, which constantly wage war against their soul, to capture them and lead them as a prisoner of sin.
- h) For example, if a carnal Christian is ruled by their physical sexual desires, they will rationalize why it's ok for them to look at pornography. With their emotions aroused, their will makes a decision to disobey the Lord. Their eyes of lust then obey their soul's directive, looking at what is forbidden.
- i) If a carnal Christian struggles with jealousy, envy, and judgmentalism, they easily become entangled in the comparison trap. Seeing a post on social media of another's blessings, their mind begins to measure their life against their friend's life. If their friend seems to be living a more fun and fulfilling life, then in a matter of seconds, jealousy and envy imprison their heart, making them feel sad, unworthy, and rejected. Self-pity and low self-esteem kick in, leading their will to vow for vengeance.
- j) If their friend seems to be presenting a mundane or less spiritual life, then in a matter of seconds, pride and self-righteousness imprison their heart. Wanting to be free of these unwanted emotions, their mind searches for their friend's faults. To build themselves up, they criticize, judge, and mock their friend for their shortcomings, even voicing this to others.
- k) If you live by the flesh, your life will be marked by sin, sadness, and spiritual darkness. You will be unable to live the abiding life Christ's calls you to live.
- l) The Lord designed your body to serve your spirit. The spirit was never meant to be governed by your body. The issue is whether your body is leading or your spirit is leading. The body is essential to fully experiencing Christ's indwelling life. But the body makes a terrible leader.

Free From Mixture

- a) In reality, most of us have some mixture of spirit, soul, and body influencing, leading, and governing us.
 - For some, it might be 30% spirit, 40% soul, and 30% body.

- For others, it might be 10% spirit, 80% soul, and 10% body.
 - Still others might be 5% spirit, 10% soul, and 85% body.
- b) Whatever your state presently is, the goal of this class is to help you become influenced, led, and governed by the indwelling Spirit. Though pristine perfection is unattainable in this life, it's not an excuse for carnal living.

Strive for Synergy

- a) Over the past twenty-five years, I have heard and read many teachings on the Spirit-led life. And sometimes those teachings gave me the impression only the spirit is important. You feel like the soul and body are evil. This idea, even if subtle, must be rejected, for it is dangerously close to first-century Gnosticism—the heretical teaching that only the spirit was vital, and the body was evil.
- b) To be clear and at the risk of repeating myself, the Lord designed your spirit, soul, and body to work in synergy together.
- c) But there must be divine order before there can be synergy. Your spirit must be first, your soul second, and your body third.
- d) Your spirit must be the leader. Your soul the processor (the mind), the expressor (the emotions), and the executor (the will). And your body the servant.

Application

- a) Take some time in prayer and think about how these five hinderances to abiding affect you.
- Natural strength
 - Self-reliance
 - The rational mind
 - Emotions and experiences
 - The body (the flesh)
- b) Write down in order, from the greatest to the least, the hinderances that affect you?
- c) What can you do to overcome these hinderances so you can live the abiding life?
- d) Take some time in prayer and ask the Lord to reveal what percentage of spirit, soul, and body governs you.