

## Lesson 1

### WHAT ARE THE WORKS OF THE FLESH?

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, **and the like**—” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Before learning what the fruit of the Spirit is, the Bible gives us a contrast. Using a Christian Bible commentary, we can define the works of the flesh listed. When it says “and the like,” this includes other sins that are similar in nature.

**Adultery** is a violation of intimacy. By forbidding adultery, the partners in marriage have a sense of security. See Matthew 5:27-28

**Fornication** is any form of sexual immorality including adultery. We get our English word "pornography" from this Greek word. The Greeks used the word "fornication" to mean "prostitution." It is a relationship that is bought and sold: sex without involvement with the person. It also includes illicit sexual sins such as homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, or incest.

**Uncleanness** is moral defilement whether in the form of lust, degenerate or extravagant living. It is a state of moral impurity related to thought, action or speech, and can be sexual. See Romans 1:24.

**Lewdness** is licentiousness or lasciviousness. This word denotes excess or absence of restraint. Lewd people have unbridled lusts and little sense of shame. They are outrageous in their shamelessness. Lewdness involves reckless sinning. It does not care what God or people think. It shocks public civility and has no regard for society or self-respect. See Eph. 4:19, 1 Peter 4:3, Rom 13:13.

**Idolatry** is the worship of or excessive devotion to, or reverence for, some person or thing. An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God in our heart. The most prevalent form of idolatry in Bible times was the worship of images that were thought to embody the various pagan deities. Idolatry is not limited to bowing before a statue but can also be a matter of the heart. Pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against God are forms of idolatry. Is it any wonder that God hates it?

**Sorcery**: The Greek word for "sorcery" is *pharmakeia*, from which we get our English word "pharmacy." Pagan priests in the ancient world administered medicine, drugs, and poison to exercise sorcery using incantations and cultic systems of potions, spells, charms and amulets. Sorcery is an attempt to bypass God's wisdom and power and give glory to Satan instead. God has no tolerance for sorcery. In Deuteronomy 18:10-12, sorcery is listed among the sinful practices of the nations surrounding Israel. God called it an abomination. Sorcery may be what's called "black" or "white" magic. All magicians try to manipulate the power of a god or demon to work on their behalf.

**Hatred** is a state of enmity toward someone. This sin causes a person to cast someone in the role of the enemy. It is a sin of hostility. Hatred is the opposite of love, for love seeks the highest good in others.

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**Contention** is strife, quarrel, especially rivalry, debate, wrangling. This sin is an expression of enmity (1 Corinthians 3:3). A person indulging in this sin loves to do battle with people and expresses antagonism with hostility.

**Jealousy** is a strong feeling of resentment against someone else's success. People having such feelings resent their friends' good fortune. They try to equal or surpass their friends' achievements. They view all others as rivals. (Acts 13:45; Romans 13:13; James 3:14-16)

**Outbursts of Wrath** denotes impulsive, violent rage. The Greek word is the same word used to describe wild, frenzied animals in an attack. The person is very violent or angry for a brief time, and then their outburst dies down. It is intense anger with fury, passion and rage.

**Selfish Ambitions** cause a person to scheme to accomplish their means. They want to put themselves forward above everything else. In doing this, they foster a complaining spirit toward others. (2 Corinthians 12:20; Philippians 1:15-18; Philippians 2:3)

**Dissensions** means division. People argue and fight thinking of each other as an enemy. Those who fall into this sin want to get ahead of others by stepping over others and separating people. They easily confuse prejudice with principle. (Romans 16:17 and 1 Cor. 3:3)

**Heresies** are self-willed opinions that stand in opposition to the truth of the Word of God. Heresy causes dissension and factions with those who hold to the truth (1 Corinthians 11:19). Heresy is the sin of forming doctrinal cliques.

**Envy** is a state of ill will toward another person because of their presumed advantage. An envious person is a bitter person who maliciously desires the worst for other people. (Matt 27:18; 1 Peter 2:1; Proverbs 14:30)

**Murder** is premeditated taking of a human life.

**Drunkenness** is intoxication that renders people insensible to even their own values, making them a social nuisance. Beyond moral degeneration, drunkenness also causes economic ruin to the person or family. (Genesis 9:20-27; 19:32-38; Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13)

**Revelries** are wild drinking parties at night into the early morning that includes unrestrained immorality. (Romans 13:13-14)

“I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who *practice* such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).

As believers in Christ, we will make mistakes. And when we do, it is important to repent and never do that sin again. When Galatians 5:21 says, “that those who *practice* such things will not inherit the kingdom of God,” this is speaking of the Christian who professes to know God, but he or she *practices* these sins—and the like. The Greek word for *practice* means “to perform repeatedly or habitually.”

Therefore, the Christian believer who repeats these sins or makes any one of these sins a habit is warned they will not inherit God's kingdom. The remedy? Galatians 5:16: “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” That's what this chapter is all about. Walking in the Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit!