

“Carnal Christian” is a Myth

The idea of there being a “Carnal Christian” is a myth. This is nothing but a popular theology that allows sinners to feel comfortable in their pews and in their sins.

The classic verse in defense for the “Carnal Christian” position is found in 1 Cor. 3:1-4.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

Here Paul could not speak spiritual things because they were not behaving as if the Holy Spirit were guiding them. He had to speak unto them as carnal. They were acting no different from non-Christians.

QUESTION: If you attend a local assembly, is everyone in that assembly a Christian?

Of course not.

Referring to a church collectively as Christians does not mean that ALL in that assembly are Christians. The apostle John warned us about those who are not really of us. (2 John 2:19) Paul was addressing these people at Corinth who were involved in uncleanness, fornication, quarreling, jealousy, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. (2 Cor. 12:20-13:5). What most people miss who are under the delusion of the Carnal Christian myth is that believers can be “Carnal” Christian. Carnal people are not saved people. We are told what to do with carnal people in our midst (1 Cor. 5:11-13).

Because of their quarreling and jealousies Paul said they ARE carnal.

“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

The Meaning of the Word Carnal

The Bible’s usage of the word *carnal* ranges from things that are *natural* to the *sensual*. There are only four instances in the New Testament where it is not necessarily sinful or depraved.

1. In Hebrews 9:10 we have “*carnal ordinances.*” These ordinances govern the everyday life of Israel.
2. In Hebrews 7:16 we **have** “*carnal commandments.*” This has to do with one who has become a priest not on the basis of a *regulation as to his ancestry.*

3. In 1 Cor. 9:11 we have “*carnal things*” that relate to food, clothing, housing – all these are carnal things.
4. In Romans 15:27 we have “*minister unto them in carnal things.*” This has to do with the duty of the body of Christ to make sure preachers have carnal things to assist them in their ministry.

In 2 Cor. 10:3 we have, “*though I walk in the flesh.*” This has nothing to do with being sinful but what is *natural*. God is the author of our flesh (Exodus 4:11, Isaiah 44:2, Jer. 1:5), which is made out of dirt (Gen. 2:7, Gen. 3:19). On the other hand, it is sinful to walk according to the flesh (2 Cor. 10:2), but it is not sinful to walk in the flesh (2 Cor. 10:3).

Adam was created carnal and all his descendants are carnal. All mammals are carnal. Jesus was carnal. Jesus had a carnal body, ate carnal food, lived in a carnal house, and provided the carnal needs of others (fed them food and healed them).

The word “carnal” is used to describe two things.

1. It describes the *composition* of a person (natural with natural needs)
2. It describes one’s *orientation*.

The *carnal composition* is not sinful; it is just *natural* – fleshly, with natural needs. The one whose *orientation* is carnal has to do with a person whose mind is geared over the temporal rather than over the spiritual and eternal. His mind is set on fleshly things to gratify the flesh. We can use Adam as an example. Adam, like the rest of us, had two planes of reality; one which was carnal and the other spiritual. We can express ourselves without conflict, but one of these is going to be in the driver’s seat. God gave us the ability (free will) to take control and discipline ourselves over our natural carnal drives. In the case of Adam, he chose to exercise his carnal drive in the *act of eating* from the tree, which was not sinful in itself, but what made it sinful is that he went *against the authority of God’s commandment* and ate from the forbidden tree. Though flesh in itself is not sinful, it becomes sinful when we prefer something over the will and commandment of God.

The other usage of the word *carnal* does have to do with sin.

Now, not too many people care about the commandments of God. They would rather indulge in sexual immorality, lusting, or causing others to lust, drunkenness, quarrelling, outbursts of anger, jealousy, dirty jokes, dirty movies, hatred, slandering others, etc.. (See Gal. 5:19-21 for a list)

Our flesh is the occasion of our sin, or the source of temptation (James 1:14), but sin itself is a choice (John 5:14, John 8:11, Rom. 6:12; Rom. 6:19 Eph. 4:26). Flesh is nothing but an inanimate conglomerate of biological tissue that has no moral quality. However, if the SOUL living in the body of flesh gives itself over to exist for bodily satisfaction by becoming filled

with inordinate lusts, then it is flesh full of sin - in the Bible called “sinful flesh.” The flesh is not sinful by nature, it is sinful by application. WE are the APPLICATORS.

There are no *carnal Christians*; there can't be. Remember what was said above about the **composition** of person which is not sinful, but one's **orientation** can be. Here is what the Bible says about being carnally minded,

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Rom. 8:6-8

The orientation of one's mind will set his affections for the flesh by opposing the spiritual. One cannot be carnally minded and spiritually minded at the same time. Jesus says,

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matt. 6:21)
“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” (Matt. 12:35)

We will be either guided by the Holy Spirit or follow our own desires that are in direct opposition to God's commandments.

One cannot please God that are in the flesh.

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:8)

We must also clear up the meaning of “flesh.” The word “flesh” in the Greek is “sarx.” It simply means *flesh*, like our body of flesh – skin. When we talk about “flesh,” we are not talking about fighting some mysterious “other self” that co-exists within that is striving for supremacy. This is pure philosophy and comes from the false doctrine of Original Sin, or Total Depravity. This has to do with the **works** of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

Our body has carnal needs. It drags us to the table, to the toilet, to the doctor, the dentist; it needs to be warm when it is cold, the stomach needs food when it is hungry. There is nothing evil with normal appetites. However, circumstances or motive can turn a normal appetite into a sinful act. It is knowingly putting appetite before or above consciousness of duty. In other words, if I decide to take a meal to the park and get ready to sit and have a delicious lunch and just a few feet away from me I see a starving individual just staring at me and I pay no attention to his need, it would be sinful not to share that meal. Now before we go off into limitless possibilities and the ifs, I know we can't feed all the starving people around the world, much less those in our own county, but sometimes circumstances arise where we can do something that is set before us where we are capable and have the means to help.

We make our flesh sinful by the **deeds** we do. And flesh (body) is sinful because the applicators who have corrupt passions in the heart manifests itself in the body. It is then called “works of the flesh.” Note in the following verse how “**flesh**” has to do with the “**deeds**” of the body.

“For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.” (Rom. 8:13)

So you see, what manifests in the body is what comes out of the heart of a person. (Matt. 12:35). Like I said, this has nothing to do with the fictitious doctrine of Original Sin and born with a “Sin Nature.” It has nothing to do with a dual personality disorder or fighting some mysterious “other self” that co-exists within a person. It is the HEART that must be dealt with and our own desires. (James 1:14)

Carnal Christians? No such thing exists. If a person is carnal he lives *according to the flesh* (deeds – works – because of the desires of his heart). This carnality has to do with sinning, and describes a person who is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ but rather a person who is depraved by his practice (deeds) of sins. He is a person who is still in his sins and will die in his sins.

Preachers like Chuck Swindoll will tell us it’s difficult to distinguish a believer from an unbeliever! Preachers like Charles Stanley will say about so-called carnal Christians, “*No matter what you do as a child of God, you are forgiven. You say, ‘Murder?’ Forgiven. ‘Stealing?’ Forgiven. ‘Adultery?’ Forgiven. ‘Worshiping idols?’ Forgiven.*” They say a Christian behaves just like an unbeliever! That’s what they call a ‘carnal Christian’!

Paul tells us,

“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9,10).

If a person is carnal, then he is carnally minded and to be ***carnally minded is death.***

We are taught the lie that there are “carnal Christians” and there are “Spirit-filled Christians.” The poor “carnal Christian” is still in bondage to his sins like the unsaved, but he’s still a Christian, just a carnal one. This is total fabrication. Christians are called “saints,” “temple of God,” “beloved of God,” “disciples,” “priests,” “elect,” “servants,” etc. etc., but NEVER a carnal Christian.