

#3 The Carnal Christian (The Self-willed Christian)

Well, wouldn't it be nice if the only two conditions were those that we've outlined thus far? Unfortunately, we all know otherwise. **There is an internal battle that every Christian struggles with. No one is exempt. It's the internal battle between your flesh and the Holy Spirit – between your will and God's will.**

It's interesting that in writing to these carnal Christians, Paul referred to them as "brothers." In other words, he recognized that they were Christians, but not living in a state of dependency and yielding. They were self-willed, prone to arguments, and living according to the flesh. 2 Corinthians 3:1 says, "*But I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal – even as unto babes in Christ.*" When you study the entire text, you find that they were acting just like non-Christians – self-willed, argumentative, divisive, and sinful. Sounds like millions of Christians doesn't it? Look at this diagram and compare it to the previous two --



The Circle – represents the person's life.

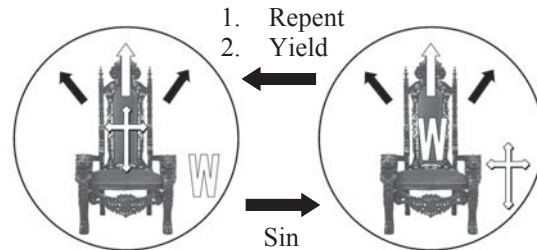
The Cross – represents Christ. Notice that Christ is inside the circle but not sitting on the throne or directing the life.

The "W" – their own will sits on the throne and directs their life. This person is a self-willed carnal Christian.

The Secret of Yielding

Now let's all be honest. Regardless of what church you attend or doctrine you adhere to, ALL OF US struggle with this internal battle. We tend to "flip" back and forth between Christ being on the throne and our own self-will on the throne. When you lose your temper, who's on the throne? When you struggle with sin, who's on the throne?

Even the apostle Paul describes his own internal struggle in Romans 7:14-25. Prior to learning the secret of yielding, he describes his defeat: "*For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns].*" He goes on in verse 24 to say, "*O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from the shackles of this body?*" Wow! Even Paul went through this. Then he discovered the SECRET OF YIELDING, which is what Roman 8 is all about. Now study the following diagram that describes this process of YIELDING.



This diagram represents a growing Christian who is learning to yield to Christ. They may flip between the two many times a day. God wants us to learn how to yield to Christ's control and influence moment by moment.

This diagram shows how we can learn to live more and more under the Lordship of Christ. When you sin, the way "back" is repentance and yielding. 1 John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" You may flip back and forth several times a day while you learn to walk in the Spirit. Our goal should be to live as the circle on the left depicts – yielded to Christ and dependent on Him. When you do, the fruit of the Spirit will grow in your life (Gal 5:22). The gifts of the Spirit will be able to manifest (1 Cor 12). God will even help you do it! Philippians 2:13 says, "*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" Take one step and He will carry you three steps.

Dear friend, my hearts desire is that this Study Guide will propel you further in your child-like dependence on Christ. May you learn the secret of yielding to Him and enjoy all the riches He has for you. ■ -- Jason Peebles

Key Memory Verse:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1

Prayer of Yielding

"Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. I choose to YIELD the throne of my life to His influence. Teach me to live moment by moment under His control and influence. Thank you for your great love in my life. In Jesus Name – Amen."

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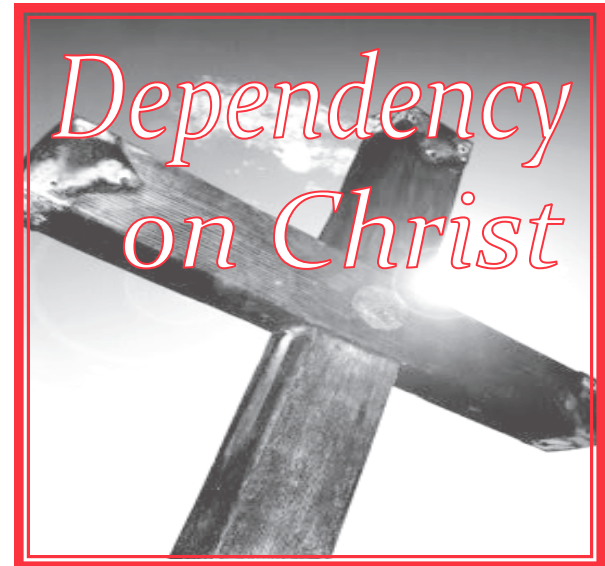
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by Jason Peebles

In God's kingdom "growing up" means that you must become like a child. It's a paradox. A paradox is something that is seemingly contrary to common sense and yet true. God operates very differently than we do. For example, in God's kingdom you have to give in order to receive. You have to surrender in order to reign, and you must become weak if you want to be strong (2 Cor 12:10). Additionally, God asks us to love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us. **Wow! At first glance, none of these principles seem correct or logical – until your eyes are opened to the ways of God.**

The Mind of Christ

If you truly want the blessings of God in your life, then you have to make an effort to switch your mind over to how Jesus thinks – **that is, you must put on the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5).** When you start thinking like Christ, you will WANT to give to others because you understand the seed principle -- that good seeds always bear good fruit (Gal 6:7,8). You will WANT to surrender to God's will because you realize that God's plan for your life is good (Jer 29:11). And, you will even be able to love your enemies and pray for those who spitefully use you. Why? Because you understand that when you respond with God's love, you give God

entry into their lives and God will reward you for it (Mt 5:11,12). **One of the most important paradoxes in God's kingdom is that in order to mature you must become like a child. Children are trusting and dependent. God is calling you to "grow up" by becoming entirely dependent on Jesus Christ in you.**



The Heart of a Child

Jesus said, *"Except you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of God"* (Mt 18:3,4). Now, think about children. They can't do much for themselves. Newborns are especially dependent. Their food, clothing, shelter, and nurture all must come from the parents or caregiver. Jesus is telling us that if we want to experience "kingdom life" then we have to be like children. Yes, He wants us to grow up in Him – but the measure for "growing up" in God's kingdom is not the same as how we measure maturity. **What we are talking about here goes beyond mental assent or "head knowledge."** It centers around **knowing Christ, fellowshiping with Him, and trusting Him.** That's why Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:17-19 -- *"[And I pray] that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God."* We are called to be like children who depend on God and trust in His love. **God wants you to look to Him as your Source of supply. He wants you to trust Him**

with all aspects of your life and business. Authentic Christian maturity is when we endeavor to maintain the heart of a child, dependent on Christ and His ability.

Three Spiritual Conditions

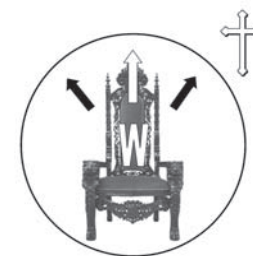
In order to trust Christ with childlike dependency, it's extremely helpful to understand the three spiritual conditions that Paul taught. This was part of Paul's world view. Every person in the world fits into one of these three categories. The apostle Paul describes: **1) the NATURAL MAN, 2) the SPIRITUAL MAN, and 3) the CARNAL MAN. You can find these three conditions clearly described in 1 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:4.** You see, when God looks at us, he does not see a white person, a black person, an American, or a Hispanic. No, God looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, *"For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* Thus, God views the heart and sees the spiritual condition of people.

The most basic determining factor for anyone's spiritual condition is whether they know Jesus Christ or not. Jesus Christ is God's provision for mankind. Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah who died for the sins of the world (Mt 16:16-17). Either you have Him in your life or you don't. 1 John 5:12-13 says, *"He who has the Son HAS life; he who does not have the Son of God DOES NOT have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."* Notice that it says he who has the son HAS life – but he who does not have the Son does NOT have life. Thus, this is the starting point. Let's examine the three spiritual conditions that Paul taught and how they relate to childlike dependency --

#1 The Natural Man (The non-Christian)

The Natural Man is the way that we all come into this world ('man' is used in the generic sense for both male and female, as in 'mankind'). We all come into this world with zero knowledge of God's Word or plan. It's the way we naturally are –

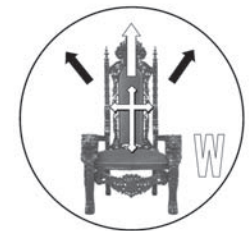
hence the phrase, "natural man." As a person grows and develops, they are molded and shaped by many factors. The most obvious is their environment, culture, religion (if any), philosophy, and their views of right and wrong. They may end up being a morally "good" person. Or, they may end up in a life of rebellion and crime. Regardless of the path they take, our heavenly Father wants to reach them with the good news of salvation through Christ. Look at Paul's description of this person – *"But the NATURAL MAN does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor 2:14). The natural man is not dependent on God. He does not know how to trust God. He trusts in his own abilities. In fact, any mention of trusting God may seem like nonsense. It takes a work of the Holy Spirit in their lives for them to discover God's wonderful plan. That's why it's imperative that we take time to share the love of Christ with those around us. Additionally, Christians have a mandate to support missionaries. That's why this ministry is dedicated to serving as a home office for missionaries. We want to help fulfill the Great Commission. When a person hears the truth of Christ, everything can suddenly change. **They can move from being "natural" to being "spiritual" – that is, spiritually alive in Christ.** **Ephesians 3:1 says, "And you has he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."** Thank God for his great love in Christ! But prior to Christ, the Bible describes us as *"dead in trespasses and sins."* Here's a simple diagram depicting the natural man (non-Christian) --



The Circle – represents the person's life.
The Cross – represents Christ. In this case, notice that Christ is outside the circle.
The "W" – their will sits on the throne and governs their life. They do what they want.

#2 The Spiritual Man (The Yielded Christian)

The second condition that Paul identifies is what he calls **the Spiritual Man.** The Spiritual Man is someone who has accepted Christ and is actively yielding to His influence and control. This is only possible by the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within Christians -- hence the phrase "spiritual man." Ephesians 1:16 lets us know that all Christians have the Holy Spirit (whether they realize it or not). It says, *"In whom [Christ] you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that you believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."* When you first believed in Christ, God "sealed" your heart with the precious Holy Spirit. He now lives in you and wants to teach you how to fully depend on Christ. In the book of Romans, Paul makes it clear that the only way to live a victorious Christian life is by the help of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:1 says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."* The only way out of sin and the "self-life" is for you to learn how to yield to the control of Christ. 1 John 2:27 says that the Holy Spirit will teach you how to abide in Christ. In describing the spiritual man, Paul says that he has *"the mind of Christ"* and discerns things accordingly (1 Cor 2:16). Study the following diagram that depicts the Spiritual Man – one who is yielded to Christ:



The Circle – represents the person's life.
The Cross – represents Christ. Notice that Christ is now inside the circle and sits on the throne, directing the life.
The "W" – their will is now submitted to Christ and His will and influence.