

The Body (Flesh)

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Aim

- ✠ To help the children understand the weaknesses of the human body.
- ✠ To provide them with tactics to overcome the sins and temptations of the flesh.

Key verses

“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:13)

Lesson

- God created us. He gave us everything we have. He gave us our bodies, our minds and our psyche. Not only that, God made us in His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27) and He saw that it was good (Genesis 1:31).
- This means that **our bodies are not bad** and they are not the source of all evil, but like all things, when they are misused, they can create a lot of havoc.
- Humans are created with a body, a spirit and a soul.
- Each of these components has its own needs and desires. The body desires food when it is hungry and sleep when it is tired. Our spirit is our connection with God. It needs spiritual sustenance through the Seven Sacraments, through prayer and through hearing the Word of God – the Bible. Our soul which contains the mind, the feelings and the will, needs to feel the presence of God in our life, and needs God to strengthen our will to do good not evil...
- St Paul tells us; *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- Our Lord Jesus Christ also tells us; *“For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”* (Luke 17:21).
- These two verses inform us of a great responsibility we have. We contain the Temple of God within us. Do we know what this means? It means that we encompass the goodness and the purity of our Lord. It also means that we have to uphold this goodness until it’s time for us to return our bodies to Him.
- Our bodies have been lent to us for a short period of time – they’re not ours. God has graciously given them to us to do some of His work while we’re here on Earth and then He’s going to take them back.
- This is all well and good but in what state are we going to return our bodies back to Christ? If someone lends you something, can you return it to them broken? Can it be torn, destroyed or cracked? Certainly not! In fact, we should do our utmost to ensure that we give it back in even better form than we received it!
- The same goes for our bodies. So how do we keep them bright and shiny? The obvious answer is to keep them pure. But unfortunately, there is a force that continually fights against us and does everything it can to make sure we are impure. This source is Satan.

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- One of Satan's most fundamental weapons is to use our bodies against us. To use our bodies against what God desires for us.
- He challenges our spirituality by appealing to the most basic of our desires. For example; food. Our bodies need food to survive – God made them that way. But God also has taught us to fast. Fasting is controlling your body. It's about not supplying your body with every whimsical craving. But Satan will whisper to you: "What's the point of fasting? Religion isn't about food – God won't put you in hell just because you broke your fast! Eat what you want and pray instead." Let's think about this. The Bible tells us that the body is driven by the tongue (James 3:2-12). However, we also know that we have control over all the powers of the enemy (Luke 10:19). But how can we realistically have authority over the devil? By rejecting his ploys to turn us away from God. By continually fasting. This will grant us the strength to overcome other temptations that the devil throws our way concerning our bodies.
- The more pure we keep our bodies, and the more we deny ourselves of bodily desires, the more we place a greater importance on the spirit. The more active our spirits, the closer we are to God and our true spiritual natures eg hermits.
- Just as purity is highly regarded among the virtues, its opposite, the sin of impurity is an abomination to the Lord, and was the cause of the great flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the defeat of the people of Israel etc. God's power and support departs from those who become enslaved to sin.
- However, we need to realise that sins of the flesh cannot overcome a person unless one gives it permission. Purity and virginity is the source of spiritual strength and success of the youth. Samson allowed submission to the seduction of Delilah and he was reduced from a judge of Israel to less than a slave. Joseph overcame the seduction of Potiphar's wife and he eventually became the second man after Pharaoh from being a slave. Spot the difference?
- Following after The flesh is a dangerous and deadly way to live. **"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts."** (Romans 13:14) Living with Christ doesn't mean we will never have a problem or that all the pressures of daily living are going to go away. Quite the opposite. Travelling through the narrow path actually guarantees more temptations and more tribulations. But we will have God's grace and strength in our life to help us live above the pressures and problems; we'll be able to stand tall in the midst of life's storms. As Christians, with God's Spirit living in us, it doesn't mean our flesh is dead or that sin is dead. They're not. But we can *live* as though we're dead to sin. Romans 6:11 says to *...reckon yourselves also dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- We need to know how to fight Satan's attacks on the flesh, senses, thoughts etc.
- We must stay away from sinful environments as they can have a negative influence on us. We should also avoid certain situations which we know might be a hazard to our spiritual lives. Anything that can expose you to temptation and stumbling should be evaded. Prevent idleness, work faithfully. Read to gain knowledge, hobbies, sports etc. Keep busy!
- Make sure you include spiritual exercises in your attempt to remain pure. Prayer, fasting, meditation, sacraments, reading the Bible, acquainting yourself with saint stories and spiritual books. Don't become so consumed in the business of this world that you neglect your own spiritual nourishment.

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- Another way of overcoming the weakness of the flesh is to flee from it. This is not a weakness. In fact, it's a sign of strength. Joseph escaped from sin but that was one of the best decisions he ever made. Rest assured that you will be given a crown for struggling and resisting sin.
- When lustful thoughts arrive, change your position or activity. Ask God for help on the spot. Ask Him for assistance in overcoming these thoughts. St Ephraim says; 'Rebuke lustful thoughts as you would an intruding dog'.
- God makes it very clear that "...whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7-8). Our *thoughts* are seeds, our *words* are seeds and our *actions* are seeds. Everything we think, say and do is a seed. If the seeds we sow are bad, such as criticism, anger, hatred we will reap the same back in our life. However, if the seeds we sow are good, like kindness, mercy and love, we will reap good fruits. The choice is ours.
- Even if you sin, don't give up hope as your sin was out of weakness, and you make it worse by continuing. It is worse if you have the attitude 'I have already fallen; why not make the most of it?' Whatever you do, don't give in to your flesh. By giving in to our flesh, doing what *we* want, think and feel, we are feeding it and making it stronger. However, when we say *no* to our flesh, it gets weaker, and our spirit can then control our flesh, and lead us to do the works of the Spirit & grow in our spiritual life and in our relationship with God.
- We can consider ourselves dead to sin by starving our flesh and feeding our spirit. When our spirit is fed regularly, it is strong. When our spirit is strong, it can control our flesh. How do we feed our Spirit? By spending time in God's Word. We need to study The Holy Bible continually. Meditate on it and obey everything written in it. By spending time in prayer. Only then we will prosper and succeed in all we do.
- How much time we spend is between God and each person, but we cannot live an overcoming life without God's help. It's the only way our spirit can win in the fight with our flesh. If we want victory over our flesh, we need to learn to think like God thinks and say what God says. This is only the result of spending time with Him in prayer and in His Word.

Conclusion

- You should have control over your own body, not vice versa.
- Ask God for strength to overcome weaknesses.
- Keep away from sources of stumbling.

Glory is to God, forever. Amen.