



“1 John 1:5-2:2”

Discussion Questions

1. What does the phrase *“by this we know”* mean?
2. What was the message heard from the beginning?
3. What was John declaring?
4. What inconsistency did John address?
5. How were some believers apparently deceiving themselves?
6. **Read 1 John 2:1** – why did John write this letter?
7. For whom is Jesus an atoning sacrifice?

Pastor Jon's Extra Notes on Carnal Christians

Can a true Christian be carnal? Can a true Christian be in the light but live in the flesh?

In answering this question, let's first define the term "carnal." The word "carnal" is translated from the Greek word *sarkikos*, which literally means "fleshly." This descriptive word is seen in the context of Christians in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

In this passage, the apostle Paul is addressing the readers as "brothers," a term he uses almost exclusively to refer to other Christians; he then goes on to describe them as "carnal." Therefore, we can conclude that Christians can be carnal. The Bible is absolutely clear that no one is sinless (1 John 1:8) from this morning's teaching. Every time we sin, we are acting carnally.

The key thing to understand is that while a Christian can be, for a time, carnal, a true Christian will not remain carnal for a lifetime. Some have abused the idea of a "carnal Christian" by saying that it is possible for people to come to faith in Christ and then proceed to live the rest of their lives in a completely carnal manner, with no evidence of being born again or a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Such a concept is completely unbiblical. James 2 makes it abundantly clear that genuine faith will always result in good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 declares that while we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, that salvation will result in works. Can a Christian, in a time of failure and/or rebellion, appear to be carnal? Yes. Will a true Christian remain carnal? No.

Christians who become carnal in their behavior can expect God to lovingly discipline them (Hebrews 12:5-11) so they can be restored to close fellowship with Him and be trained to obey Him.

God's desire in saving us is that we would progressively grow closer to the image of Christ (Romans 12:1-2), becoming increasingly spiritual and decreasingly carnal, a process known as sanctification. Until we are delivered from our sinful flesh, there will be outbreaks of carnality. For a genuine believer in Christ, though, these outbreaks of carnality will be the exception, not the rule.