

Christmas is a microcosm of what can happen to all of our lives subtly over the years.

If you can maintain your “spirit life” over Christmas, you can make it throughout the year.

One way to keep focused on God at Christmas is to give to those truly in need.

That’s what God did for us in giving Christ.

We watch people lose ground at Christmas, some never make it up.

There is a way to guard against this not only at Christmas, but at all times and seasons of our lives.

I John 2:15-17 - Don't love *the world's ways*. Don't love *the world's goods*. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—*wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important*—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all it’s wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity. (MSG)

I John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world — *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* — is not of the Father but is of the world.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Lust of the flesh

The desires of our temporal nature that betrays our eternal design, destiny and purpose.

Galatians 5:16-17

16 I say then: *Walk in the spirit*, and you shall not *fulfill the lust of the flesh*.

17 For the flesh lusts or wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

The bible doesn’t tell us to **not walk in the flesh**, but rather to walk or be **governed or walk by our spirit** and we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The struggle or pull of the flesh never leaves us or we never grow beyond its demands.

Romans 7:18-20 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells. I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within

me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. (MSG)

How clearly does this describe the struggle we all face as Christians?

There is an answer...

II Corinthians 4:16 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our *outward man is perishing*, yet the *inward man is being renewed day by day*.

Romans 7:21- For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

When we are governed by the inward man that has been born of God, it is his power that sustains us and not our commitment.

The value of fasting is that it heightens the "inward man."

I John 3:9 - No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.