

Lifetime Guarantee

BILL GILLHAM

**with Questions for Further Study
by Preston H. Gillham, M.S.**

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How You Got into Your Fix

One night some years ago, I was invited to dinner in the home of a member of the church in which I was speaking. The couple's son, his wife, and their one-year-old flew in from out of state shortly after I arrived. It's always neat to see people warmly greeting each other, but this visit took a sudden nosedive. It seems the baby's diaper bag was missing, and mama began to let daddy know in no uncertain terms whose fault it was. The poor guy was calmly trying to reassure her that this was the termination of the flight, that it was probably still on the plane, that he'd call his friend who worked at the airport, and that they could pick it up the next day.

She lit into him like a tiger, however, and *ordered* him back into the car, telling him not to come back without that bag. That's when he, feeling emasculated in front of his own folks and a stranger, retaliated. But brother, he made no headway. She was acting out the role of headship in that relationship, and she made no effort to conceal it.

This young woman is a Christian. Surprised? “How can a new creature in Christ act like Satan himself is controlling her?” you ask. It’s easy. We see it every day, don’t we? The Bible calls it “walking after the flesh,” and she was simply demonstrating her unique version of it for the whole world to see. It brings great dishonor to the name of Christ, but I could identify with her. I’ve done things even worse than that. As a result of learning the things I discuss in this book, however, I’ve seen Christ live through me to drastically reduce such episodes to a trickle of what they once were.

Have you ever pondered the question posed by Romans 7:15: “Why do I do what I do, when I really don’t want to do it?” I know exactly why. It’s because I sometimes walk after the flesh. But for a long time, I didn’t know what my flesh was. And how could I know I was free unless I got a handle on just what it was I needed to be free from? You likewise need to gain insight into your unique version of the flesh. That’s the purpose of this chapter.

On the surface, you might get the idea as you read along that this chapter deals with child-rearing; but I’m dealing with the structuring of your flesh. Since you began playing Lord of the Ring in infancy, that’s where it began getting choreographed, so I must deal with it there.

Caution: Make it your major purpose as you read this chapter to learn from the Holy Spirit what happened to you as a child; then let your secondary purpose be to see any mistakes you may be making with your own children. It’s primarily your flesh we’re interested in exposing.

Righteousness

Let’s start by coming to a common understanding of the term “righteousness.” This understanding alone could revolutionize your life. You can consider the term “righteousness” from two viewpoints: 1. righteous works (behavior); or 2. righteous identity (state of being).

It’s my conviction that most Christians think only of righteous performance—holy behavior—when they think of righteousness. Of course, godly behavior is important. Biblically it refers to “righteous works.” But the Word is very clear

that there is a righteousness *that is absolutely unrelated to performance* (see Galatians 3:6-9 and Romans 4:9-13). It is a declaration by God of a person's identity. He says that He will declare a person righteous under one condition—if the person is hidden in Christ by faith.

Using this definition of righteousness, then, it means that God *declares* a person accepted, “right” with Him. The tragedy is that most people who have been declared “all right” by God continue to strive to generate their own declaration of being “all right.” The Bible refers to this as “dead works.”

Biblical Definition of Flesh

Next we need a biblical definition of “flesh.” In Philippians 3:3-9, we find a very clear explanation:

³For we . . . put no confidence in the flesh, ⁴although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. ⁷But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them to be but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found *in Him*, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (emphasis added).

This passage leaves no doubt that the term “flesh” in this context refers to the Christian’s “old ways.” Please don’t misunderstand me: The term “flesh” does not refer to the Christian’s *body* in this context. The body is not the “bad guy.” God made the whole man and redeems the whole man—spirit, soul, *and body*. In other biblical contexts, the

term “flesh” is sometimes used to refer to the body, but here the term simply means the Christian’s old ways.

I wish to make ten points concerning this passage that will give us a better idea of what it means to “walk after the flesh.”

1. Verses 3-4 make it clear that Paul is challenging you to a flesh contest. Walking after the flesh doesn’t necessarily mean chasing women. Some flesh trips can be very productive. Paul claims he’s got “better” flesh than you. He can perform better than you can.
2. Since this is the inspired Word of God and Paul states that he has the *best* “old ways,” what he says is true. It means exactly what it says. This man was “Captain Israel!” (Remember, Jesus is not to be considered, as He had no “old ways.”)
3. Paul’s flesh was generated by *Saul*.
4. Saul’s motive for perfecting these patterns for living was to satisfy his need for love. *He sought to get it from God, from others, and from self by measuring up to certain standards (performance).*
5. When Saul got saved, the Bible teaches that he was “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:6).
6. Saul was “buried with Christ” (Romans 6:3,4).
7. *Paul (not a resurrected Saul)* was born—created fresh—as a brand-new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
8. Paul, the *new* spirit man, was born into Saul’s former earthsuit (body) after Saul was crucified with Christ.
9. The “old ways,” the old program for living, generated by Saul now became Paul’s “flesh.” It is my personal conviction that this remained in the brain of the earthsuit.
10. Paul states that he abandoned Saul’s former method (performance-based acceptance) for getting his need for self-esteem satisfied and opted for God’s method (Jesus-based acceptance).

In Philippians 3:9 we see Paul, the new man in Christ, stating that he has scrapped his “old ways” of generating righteousness for “a [different] righteousness not derived from law [*Saul’s* standard, which happened to correlate with Mosaic law due to the culture], but based upon the righteousness that is from above through faith in Christ” (author’s paraphrase). Make no mistake about it. *Perfectionism has its roots in establishing a righteousness of your own based on law—your law.*

It’s not carnal for a Christian to be perfectionistic, but Paul’s motive for developing it was. Was Paul perfectionistic in his approach to godly living? Yes! But he was liberated from using perfectionism as a means of generating self-acceptance. He generated his self-acceptance through setting his mind on who he now was in Christ—acceptable. He then allowed Christ to live *His* life through Paul, using Paul’s perfectionistic, goal-oriented traits to bring glory to His name on earth, living out His life of agape love.

Will the Real Enemy Please Stand Up?

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against [the forces of evil]” (Ephesians 6:12). I want to caution you as we begin to look at how this all may have worked out in your life that when I point out mistakes made by your parents and peers, you should direct your hostility toward the biblically identified target, Satan, and not toward your folks. It isn’t them you ought to be angry with; it’s the Evil One who has worked through your parents to try to destroy you. You want to know why your folks did some of the things they did? Go take a look at what happened to them when they were kids. But let’s not get mad at grandma and grandpa, either. If you trace all the garbage back to its source, who do you finally wind up with? Satan! He is the one who first deceived, who hates and destroys families. Direct your anger at him—that’s biblical.

Covert Rejection

Anyone can see that little Charlie got overtly rejected by his parents. What most fail to see is that the rejected child’s self-image is shaped by his experience so he winds up *feeling* as if his

folks are *perfectly justified* in rejecting him. He reasons he'd reject himself, too, if the shoe were on the other foot, because he sees himself as a no-good bum who doesn't deserve to be loved.

But there is a much more subtle form of rejection that's rampant on planet earth. Let's call it "covert rejection." (My friend Charles Solomon has written an excellent book on the subject of rejection. I highly recommend *The Rejection Syndrome* [Tyndale].)

In the case of the person who is being overtly rejected, all the cards are up on the table, and by the teen years most children see very well that they are being rejected. In the case of covert rejection, however, most kids never discern what's happening to them. It simply seeps over their personalities like a slowly gathering fog they can't identify, much less verbalize to someone else. The *emotional results are the same* for both types of rejection, though, so the covertly rejected child might say, "*I feel* as if they don't love me," whereas the overtly rejected child might say, "*I know* nobody loves me."

Examples of Covert Rejection

Perfectionism

If a parent seems to drive himself to perform perfectly in most things he tackles, seems to have perfect performance standards for himself, and insists that his child also perform perfectly, he will unwittingly teach his child that he's inadequate. The child will begin to accept as "fact" the notion, *I can't do anything right! No matter how hard I try, I always foul everything up.* Then his feeler gets stuck, and he begins to feel this way about himself constantly.

The ones who are thirsty for their folks' acceptance adopt the Avis Rent-A-Car posture, "We try harder," and develop into perfectionists themselves. Those who are not, go 180 degrees in the opposite direction, becoming impulsive in their search for acceptance.

When the perfectionist gets saved he will typically become quickly bound by law, *his* law, the law of having to perform perfectly as a Christian in order to accept himself. It's a standard that he's trying to live up to in order to generate and maintain self-acceptance.

No Physical Love

A child who receives no physical love from her folks will *not* learn that *It's very difficult for my folks to demonstrate physical affection*. She will learn *I'm unlovely*. She will then begin to feel unlovely. If dad avoids holding his little girl on his lap, snuggling her, holding hands while strolling, and so on (all in a healthy way), she will learn about herself in the process, not about dad. If overt affection from her dad is missing, she has a good chance of developing into an adult who has hang-ups about relating to males in a physical love relationship, either being sexually promiscuous or perhaps finding it difficult to relate easily to husband, sons, or male friends. When she becomes a born-again believer, this will become a part of her unique version of the flesh. The Evil One will try to control her through these patterns.

Ignore Your Child

Little kids spell love t-i-m-e. "Spend time with me," their words and actions cry out. "If you *don't* spend time with me," they reason, "then whatever you *do* spend time with is worth more to you than I am. Therefore, I am worth less than that is. Therefore, I am *worthless*." It matters not *how* you ignore the child. You can do it by working all the time, golfing all the time, soul-winning all the time, or you can be at home but just never interact with him. The emotional results will usually be the same. He'll feel worthless.

The child doesn't deduce this through a logical reasoning process, but it all comes into him at the gut level nevertheless. We hear it said that it's not the *quantity* of time a parent spends with his child that counts, but the *quality*. (This statement is often heard from the lips of successful, busy men and women.) You don't get quality time, however, unless you get it by traveling the road of quantity. The intimacy will evolve as a by-product of sharing many good times together. I know of no shortcuts.

How many Christian men and women have I counseled who are either spending their lives in a frantic search to maintain a sense of personal worth, or, at the other extreme, who cannot tolerate success or praise if they do receive it?

I've Got a Better Idea

Some parents are like the Ford Motor Company's advertising slogan: They always have a better idea. No matter how well the child does, they have a habit of suggesting how he could have improved. They rarely praise him. The idea is to consistently give him a "better" way he could have done it after he has already chosen and carried out his own idea. This is an alternative way of producing the same emotional results described above. This communicates to him that he is stupid. If he believes it long enough, his feeler will get stuck. A commonly observed illustration of this is the parent who harps about the only C grade his child receives on his report card while virtually ignoring the As and Bs.

Ridicule

Verbalizing to a child that he is stupid, ugly, clumsy, uncoordinated, lazy, "just like my sorry brother-in-law," and so on gives him solid evidence that he really *is* a loser. Pointing out to a daughter that she'd be "beautiful with a sack over her head" should fix her feeler up just dandy for relating to males later in life. The devil ought to be able to take that kind of garbage and make her either promiscuous or frigid—promiscuous to "prove" her femininity or to obtain male acceptance, or else frigid, convinced that she is totally unfeminine.

Nonverbal Ridicule

Nonverbal ridicule is accomplished by waiting until an appropriate moment, such as when the child hands dad the wrong screwdriver. The idea is to do things like sighing deeply, rolling the eyes toward the ceiling, slowly wagging the head as if the load is almost too heavy to bear. This produces the same results as overt ridicule and may be even more destructive since it's more subtle. That way the child accepts the total blame for his "stupidity" rather than being able to discern that perhaps he is being mistreated.

No Teaching Time

The mother who never takes time to teach and train her daughter what it means to be a woman—baking, sewing, house-keeping, including the intimate tasks such as proper hygiene at

the onset of menstruation—communicates to her daughter that she is worthless and stupid, that she is not worth her mother's time. In effect, she fails to teach her daughter how to "female." The girl can easily develop into a woman who doesn't feel feminine.

This can also be accomplished by a dad who communicates to his little daughter that he'd wanted her to be a son and so has treated her like a boy. Such a girl often receives her initiation into the world by being given a masculine name at birth. She's whipped before she starts by flunking the physical for acceptance. Often her only "acceptance" from dad comes by roughhousing with him "like a boy."

The illustration of non-teaching, non-intimacy cited above with the mother-daughter relationship can, of course, be applied to the father-son relationship as well; and a boy who grows up in that situation often develops into a man who feels threatened in his male role.

Overprotection

My friend Chuck Solomon tells a story about an orphaned baby fox that a woman discovered in the country one frigid winter day. She took pity on it, carried it home, bottle-fed it, weaned it onto dog food, and taught it tricks such as pushing a button with its nose to fill its water bowl. She loved it almost as if it were a child.

Two years later, she had the most beautiful, full-grown fox in the county. But she began to realize that the time for her to set the fox free to enjoy the fringe benefits of adult fox life had arrived. So, she returned him to the site of their first meeting, and after kissing him good-bye put him out into the woods. As she drove away, her mind was churning, *Oh, how this hurts*, she thought. *I've poured my life into that fox for two years. I hope he can somehow appreciate that without me he'd be dead.*

But what became of the fox? It was January and getting down to 5 degrees at night. The fox curled up into a ball to try to keep warm. As the cold dawn would break, he could hardly get unballled, he was so stiff. He was hungry and frigid. Something little would scurry past his nose. It was normal fox food, but he didn't know it; he was looking for his dog food. He was thirsty,

but knew nothing of searching out the spring a mile away. He was looking for his button to push. In two weeks he was a dead fox!

That woman killed him just as surely as if she'd shot him in the head with a .22. She killed him with what she called "love," but it wasn't love. She didn't really have his best interests at heart (agape). Her treatment of him kept him from learning how to fox!

People do the same kind of thing to their children. They make all the decisions for them, tell them what to wear, how to stand, how to smile, when they can accept Christ as Savior, and when they can't. They handpick private schools with teachers who will continue the overprotection process.

When such a kid reaches age twenty-one, his folks say, "All right, Charlie, we've done the very best we could for you, at great personal sacrifice. But the expense was well worth it. Now go out there and face the world! Find yourself a spouse and live the victorious Christian life. We're expecting great things from you."

The young "adult" then creeps out into the world looking for his dog food bowl and a button to push. He crashes and burns! *He doesn't know how to people.* He's hooked on needing someone to make all his decisions for him because *he's* never been allowed to make any. Physically he's an adult; emotionally he's in elementary school. His feeler's stuck. Color him feeling guilty, impotent as a person, and stupid.

Indulgence

Indulgence is one of *the* most destructive things a parent can do to a child. Its end product is a person with an unbridled, unbroken will who lives with one goal in mind—to take care of Number One. If anything goes wrong, it's never *his* fault. If there are bills to be paid but his church is planning a ski trip to Colorado, he never bats an eye. "Man, I hope there's a new snow cover when we get there," is all he says.

This problem of indulgence seems to be escalating, and I personally believe it's because we have so many working mothers. Admittedly it's sometimes necessary for a mother to work outside the home, but often the motive is TV sets and boats. The working parents arrive home at 5:30 with Johnny in tow from the day-care center. Everyone's tired, and the child misbehaves. The folks don't want to discipline him, so they let him

get away with things too much. Through this process, he becomes the acting head of the house. He runs things *his* way. He is Lord of the Family Ring.

Being a Christian means among other things that I submit myself to God's authority over me. I agree to let Him establish His Kingdom inside me. I let Him sit in my chair. But the indulged person often has great difficulty submitting to *any* authority, unless he agrees totally with that authority, in which case *he* still remains in control. Color him feeling rebellious.

Stonewalling

Parents will often bottle up their emotions and give their children few outward signs of how they're feeling. It complicates matters all the more if a given parent is a quiet person who communicates only with "Yes," "No," "Maybe," and similarly uninformative answers. The child of such a parent, because of his need for acceptance, will begin to try to read mom by Braille. He'll crank out his feelings antenna and search for emotional evidence that he's making it with her. He constantly checks his emotions as *the* barometer of truth that determines how his mom is reacting to him.

Females are especially vulnerable to this, because the Lord has constructed them to be intuitive folks to begin with. The female has the ability to arrive at a conclusion via a mysterious inner "knowing" and be right on target—much more so than a male. Thus, girls can be deceived into working their intuition overtime, and it results in overly depending on their emotions as a valid indicator of "truth."

Performance-Based Acceptance

I have attempted to describe briefly some of the major mistakes that may have been made by your parents that could have resulted in your growing into an adult Christian who has a lot of difficulty making the Christian life work. But I believe we have yet to hit upon the devil's biggest weapon. His most effective technique, visible in epidemic proportions, is "performance-based love," or "performance-based acceptance," which I'll sometimes refer to as PBA.

It works like this. If you perform (act) as I want you to, I'll accept you; if you don't, I'll reject you. In other words, I realize that I possess something that you need—love. So I'm going to use my “supply” to control you.

The youngest of our four sons is named Wade. Suppose I caught him lying to me when he was eight. Watch me blow it as I interact with him. “All right, Wade, you lied to me!” This is okay, so far. I'm nailing his poor performance. “If there's anything I can't stand, it's a *liar*.” Oh, oh; I've ceased to deal with *performance* and have switched to criticizing the *performer*. “And your mother can't stand liars either! We promised each other thirty years ago that we'd never tolerate a liar in this house, but it looks like we've got our first liar! And God hates liars, too! ‘All liars shall have their place in the hell of fire!’ I'll show you what we do to liars around here! We spank 'em! You get into that bedroom, you liar!” And I lay it on him.

Rear Wade this way for several years, and then interview him at age fifteen. If you could get him to open up to you, this is what he'd say: “I *feel* like dad can't stand *me* because of the way I *act*. Neither can mom. She can't stand to be around me. It's just this *feeling* I've got. I know it's true. And I *feel* like God is mad at me most of the time, too, because of the way I act. Oh, I see all those verses in the Bible about how much God loves me, but I just don't feel that way about my relationship with Him. And you know, I don't blame any of them, because I don't like me, either! Fact is, if they *did* start to act like they loved me, I'd think they'd lost their marbles.”

See? *His feeler is stuck on rejection*. That's the result of performance-based acceptance. I don't want to do that to Wade, and neither did your folks want to reject their children that way. That's the devil's work. But I've got to deal with Wade's lying. How do I accomplish this without destroying his personhood?

Reject Performance, Not Performer

It's really pretty simple once you see it. You deal with the performance, not with the performer. Here's how I should handle the lying: “All right, Wade Gillham, you lied to me.” I'm rejecting performance. “And if there's one thing I can't stand, it's *lying*.” I'm still rejecting performance. “And your mother can't

stand it either. Thirty years ago, we swore that there was one thing we would never allow in our house, and that's *lying*. We never have, and we don't intend to begin with you. And God can't stand lying, either. He hates it! Christ died because of stuff like that!" Now, have I said anything about Wade? No, I'm talking about what he *did*, not about him. I'm dealing with his performance, not his person.

Now Deal with Person, Not Performance

I could continue: "Now, Wade, if I didn't love you, I'd let you go ahead and lie. I'd indulge you and let you generate a big, green highway for lying to people to get your needs met. But I won't fail you like that. I love you too much. So, I'm going to help you with your problem. You get into that bedroom. I'm going to spank you for lying to me." Can you see that the very act of disciplining Wade will now be a demonstration of my commitment to him and my love for him? "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Hebrews 12:6).

If we interview Wade at age fifteen after having been reared under this system, he'd say, "Dad can't stand the way I *act* sometimes, but he sure does love *me*. Mom's the same way. Sometimes the things I *do* really bug her, but there's no doubt in my mind that she loves *me*. And God is displeased with some of my behavior, too, but this one thing I know. He loves *me*. Hey, I don't always like the way I *act*, either. I'm working on that, but I accept myself. I like *me*." Do you see the difference?

PBA—Satan's Chief Tool on Earth

Every religion from Mormonism to voodoo is based on PBA, humanity's seeking acceptance from God by earning it. Christianity, however, is *relationship*, not religion. God reaches out to us with grace (unmerited favor) through Jesus Christ's finished work. This relationship is not for sale. Jesus bought it with His life. It cannot be earned through PBA. You don't earn a gift, you gratefully accept it.

The world system, on the other hand, is based totally on PBA, whether you're trying to get the acceptance of peers in the

jungles of the Amazon or the jungles of Harlem; whether you're reared in a Mafia member's home or a pastor's home. Performance is the name of the game. Perform well enough and you can earn your love supply out of your environment, even in your church.

One of the best examples I can offer in our culture is the school system. Now, I'm not setting out to condemn the schools, but let's face it, they weren't handed down from Mount Sinai. They are part of the world. Even the Christian schools are not exempt from PBA.

PBA in the Classroom

I'm going to use Bill, my number three son, as "Exhibit A." I saved some of his first-grade papers to illustrate my point about PBA in our schools. He's a grown man now, a delightful brother in the Lord who's an editor and a musician. Illustration 2.1 depicts one of his spelling papers.

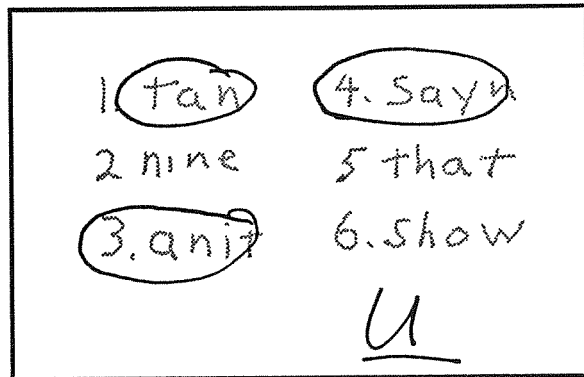


Illustration 2.1

Now, let's say that I decide I need to go up to the school to discuss Bill's progress (or lack of it) with his teacher. I say, "Ma'am, I see here that Bill's given it six shots, and he's got three right and three wrong, which got him a grade of U. But what about this word *nine*? He got that one right, but you didn't say anything about that one. How come?"

She might say, “Now, Dr. Gillham, you’ve got to understand something. It’s not Bill’s handling of the word *nine* that we’re concerned with this year. He’s already got that one whipped. It’s the word *ten* he’s having trouble with ’cause he’s from Oklahoma. He calls it *tan*. Now that’s a problem.” Her whole focus is on drawing attention to errors, not on encouraging small signs of progress.

Here’s another paper that’s not Bill’s. It was given to me by the mother of a seven-year-old boy. He produced it for a creative writing assignment (see Illustration 2.2).

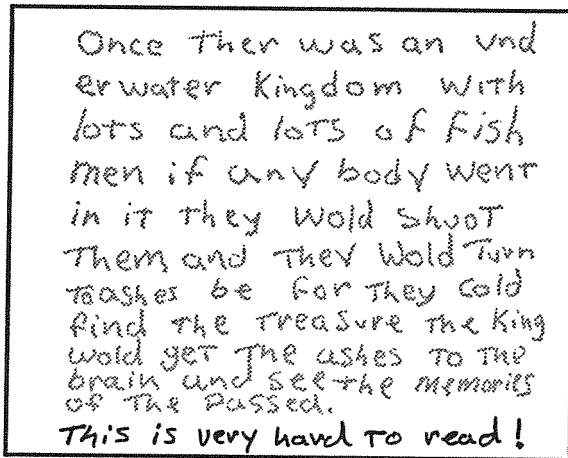


Illustration 2.2

I don’t know how extensively you’ve studied human intelligence, but this is a smart cookie! We want to do what we can to encourage a kid like this. Did you see what his teacher put on his paper, however? “This is very hard to read!” Thud. Instead of encouraging his talent, she put him down. She passed up an opportunity to edify and build up, and he’s going to take it as a personal inadequacy.

Now back to my Bill for one more example. In the paper below, you can see that the teacher has discovered a severe case of the short lower case e’s. She marked every one of them wrong (see Illustration 2.3)!

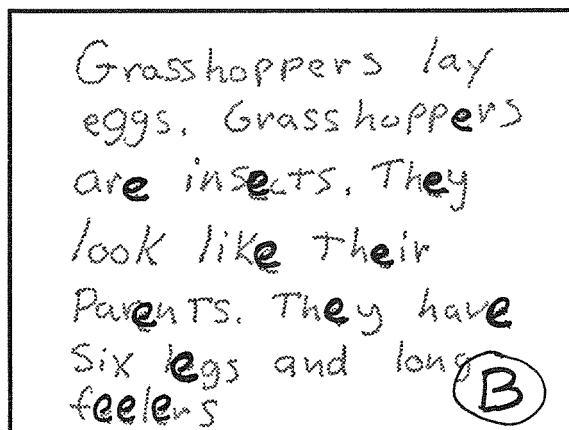


Illustration 2.3

Let's say that I decide it's time to go back up to see the teacher again, and I take Bill's paper along. I say, "Now, Ma'am, I see you've given Bill a B because he's blown it with his little e's there, but what about this o in the word *grasshopper*? That's a pretty good looking o. And how about that l in *lay*? That's nice and straight, and you didn't say anything about that."

And she'd say something like this to me, "Now after visiting with you *twice* on this same matter, I'm beginning to gain some insight into your son's problem. Let's take it from the top again. We're not interested in your boy's o's and l's. He's got those down pat. But if we're ever going to stamp the ignorance out of him, we've got to get him straightened out on his e's." You see, her mentality is that in order to help him, she's got to find something that he's doing wrong and then straighten him out.

Now, to show you I've got this teacher pegged right, look at this one. She's scored it 100, but messy. She can't get him on math today, so she's going to nail him on cleanliness (see Illustration 2.4.)!

Now I don't mean to pick on this teacher. And I'm not hammering the school system but the world system. It's designed to destroy, especially the weak ones, the very ones upon whom the Lord Jesus has compassion. And we do it to them. We do it in our own homes, to our own spouses and kids! I managed my own

family this way for years. Praise God, He turned me around (more about that later when I discuss my unique version of the flesh).

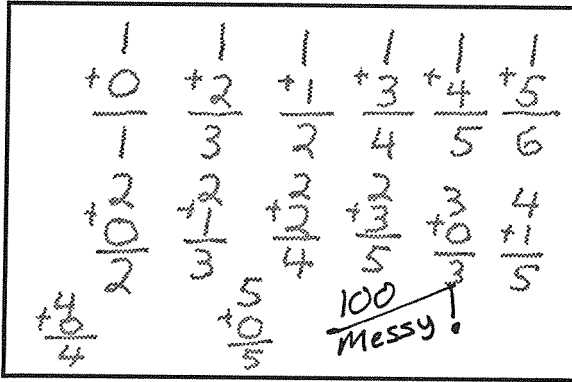


Illustration 2.4

Encourage One Another

What's the alternative to PBA in the classroom setting? Here's another actual school paper (see Illustration 2.5).

This teacher simply discovers the best thing the child has done on the paper and comments on it. It's not flattery. The Word teaches not to do that, that it's hollow. She's just trying to encourage, to find something she can do to edify the people around her.

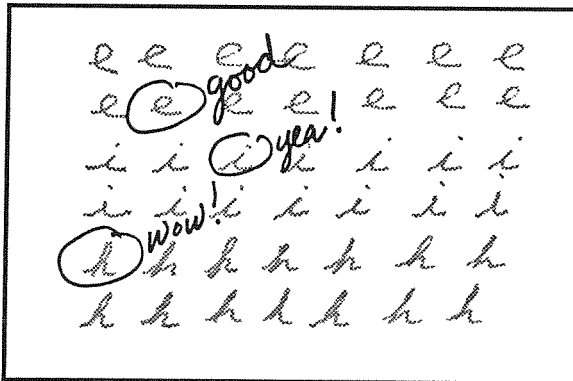


Illustration 2.5

Does that mean a teacher should never tell a student he's doing something wrong? Of course not. But you have to earn the right to do it. Look at this paper (see Illustration 2.6):

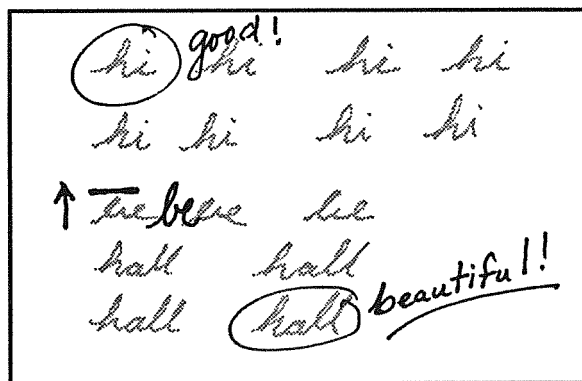


Illustration 2.6

You see, the teacher has encouraged the child with “good” and “beautiful.” Her positive attitude toward him has earned her the right to say, “Oh, by the way, George, your lower case b’s are too short. Here’s a model for you to imitate next time.” How do you suppose he’s going to respond to that kind of encouragement? The same way you would!

That’s a picture of Jesus Christ. What if He had said to Peter at the first opportunity, “Get thee behind me, Satan!” Scratch one prospective disciple! The guy never would have joined up. It would have been “Jesus and the eleven.” But no, He loved him in obvious ways, thus earning the right to love him yet another way by punching him out. Sure, He got tough with people at times, but they *needed* it. That is the definition of *agape*.

Jesus-Based Acceptance

One of the best-kept secrets in Christianity is that God accepts us. True, He can’t stand our sinful acts, but He loves us. He doesn’t have us on performance-based acceptance; He has us on *Jesus-based acceptance*. If you have accepted Jesus as

your Lord and Savior, the Father has accepted you completely. Performance has nothing whatever to do with it. Performance is important to God, yes, but it has to do with winning His *approval*, not His acceptance. It has to do with hearing Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" one day at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but it has nothing to do with hearing Him say, "I accept you as My beloved child" (John 1:12).

You can be the greatest performer on the block at keeping God's standards, and you'll still be totally rejected by God if you are unsaved. One of the major purposes of those standards (the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, etc.) is to frustrate you to the point where you'll see that there's no way you're ever going to earn His acceptance. You've got to change methods. You've got to come to the Father through *Christ's* perfection, just as He said.

To demonstrate how deeply entrenched Satan has made the performance-based acceptance syndrome, consider this biblically based illustration. On a one-to-ten scale, where ten is the best, put a number on how well you accept yourself, your spouse, and your kids, assuming all are born again. Let's suppose you selected a five for yourself. You're saying that you still have five additional points to climb before you can accept yourself perfectly.

But God accepts you perfectly in Christ already. God doesn't grade on a one-to-ten scale; He grades pass-fail. His acceptance of you and me is not contingent on our performance, but on what we have done with Jesus Christ's performance for us. If you have surrendered to Jesus as Lord and Savior, then God has already accepted you completely. He couldn't love or accept you more if you had never sinned. And He'll never love or accept you less no matter how often you *do* sin.

Actually, any Christian who accepts himself or any other believer at less than ten has higher standards than God! He sees himself and his loved ones falling far short of the standard for acceptance. This person is using performance as the criterion for acceptance. God, however, uses Christ's finished work for us as the criterion for acceptance. Thus, any Christian who is striving for acceptance is fighting a battle that's already been won.

(For additional help in identifying your unique version of the flesh, see the “Flesh Inventory” on pages 243-44.)

Questions for Further Study

1. In Philippians 3:3-9, Paul elaborates on his unique version of the flesh. How was his flesh developed?
2. What are some of the insights you have gained so far concerning the flesh, and what has God’s Spirit pointed out to you concerning your version of the flesh? Hint: Take special note of how you get your need for love and self-love met.
3. What is necessary to be accepted by God?

Answers on page 234.

Answers to Questions for Further Study

Preston H. Gillham, M.S.

Chapter 1: Why You Struggle

1. The Bible says that “God is love.” He (God) created you with a need for love so that you would need Him. If you didn’t have a need for love, you wouldn’t have a need for God.

2. Given the fact that a child learns primarily about himself during the early years, the environment of the home and society can be evaluated to find out what kind of learning took place. The message coming to the child will determine his beliefs about himself and his ability to get his needs met *his* way from the world around him. This will translate into thought, emotion, and behavior (the flesh). By the time the child is able to reason abstractly and see what the circumstances really were, it will be “too late.” The habit patterns will already have developed, and the individual will be looking for reinforcement of his feelings, thoughts, and behavior. This will only act to strengthen the fleshly habits.

3. Your answer to this question will be unique to you. The question is designed to help you determine what kind of acceptance methods you have employed independently from God and His provision through Christ. For some, your tools of the trade will be ugly and gross, such as manipulation, profanity, illicit sex and so on. For others, your acceptance tools will be very socially acceptable. Examples might be service to others, giving gifts, hard work, achievement, and excellent physical condition. Note in regard to the last things mentioned that these characteristics, in and of themselves, are very good. The thing that makes them wrong is the *motive* for doing them: to gain acceptance independent of God’s provision. The “Flesh Inventory” at the end of this book (next section) will assist you in discerning your flesh’s traits.

4. The answers to this question and the previous question will be basically the same. This is not intended to be a trick or a redundant question. The emphasis is to be placed on understanding that the methods used to gain acceptance in the world are the *same methods* used to cut God out of the picture. If this is grasped, the purpose of the question will have been successful.

Chapter 2: How You Got into Your Fix

1. Paul's flesh was primarily developed by Saul, the old, lost man. Prior to finding Jesus on the Damascus road, he was independent and rebellious toward God's perfect plan. In order to gain an understanding of *Paul's* flesh and its development, we need to look at *Saul's* lifestyle. The same will hold true for you. In addition, all saved people can develop fleshly patterns *after* salvation simply by failing to walk in the Spirit, trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to meet their needs.

2. Your answer to this question will be similar to questions 3 and 4 in Chapter 1, except that this question is challenging you to go a step further in terms of understanding. You should recognize at this time the dynamics of how your flesh developed, as well as how it manifests itself from time to time. In addition, we trust you will experience a growing disdain and dissatisfaction for what you are seeing in your fleshly motives.

3. Salvation alone! You must be born again. There must have been the acknowledgment of sin, repentance, and an asking of Jesus to be your Savior and Lord. The ways in which this takes place in a person's life are as diverse as God's creative call can be. Trust the Lord to be your guide as you look at your personal relationship to the Lord Jesus. And remember, salvation is all that is required to be accepted by God.

Chapter 3: How Anabel and I Got into Our Fix

1. Now that you have come to recognize your fleshly patterns, you should be looking for specific ways in which God is choreographing circumstances, challenging you to deal with these areas of fleshly disobedience. He could be doing this in a variety of ways, from something you have read in His Word to a specific circumstance that is causing your flesh stress and pointing you to Christ as the answer.

2. The time that we live here on this earth is the only opportunity we'll have to walk in trust and obedience to the Father. If He automatically erased the learning opportunities that we have (stemming from having to deal with our old, fleshly ways), we would have no chance to grow in the character and likeness of Jesus Christ. We must face these challenges in order to recognize the Lord Jesus' sufficiency in our lives.

3. Although there are many reasons that you could be experiencing frustration at every turn, perhaps the primary point that should be focused on is this: Your loving heavenly Father may be trying to break your self-sufficiency, strength, and independence so that you can adequately and willfully cry out to Him as your sufficiency. Unless the Father helps you to realize your insufficiency, you might

Flesh Inventory

Ask the Holy Spirit to use this inventory to assist you in identifying what your unique version of the flesh is like. Even though it is true that we are free in Christ, many believers have trouble identifying what it is they are free from.

Place a number (0 to 10, where 10 is greater) beside any of these traits with which you *struggle*.

- | | |
|--|--|
| — Anger | — Fear |
| — Anxiety | — Feelings of Helplessness or Weakness |
| — Argumentative | — Feelings of Rejection |
| — Astrology, Horoscopes, etc. (attracted to) | — Feelings of Stupidity |
| — Bigotry | — Feelings of Worthlessness |
| — Bitterness | — Gluttony |
| — Boastful | — Greed |
| — Bossy | — Guilt |
| — Causing Dissension | — Hatred |
| — Conceited | — Hostility |
| — Controlled by Emotions | — Homosexual Lust |
| — Controlled by Peer Pressure | — Idolatry |
| — Covetousness | — If It Feels Good, Go for It |
| — Critical Tongue | — Impatience |
| — Deceitfulness | — Impulsiveness |
| — Depression | — Impure Thoughts |
| — Dominance | — Inadequate |
| — Drug Dependency | — Indifference to Others' Problems |
| — Drunkenness | — Inferiority Feelings |
| — Envy (depressed at the good fortune of others) | — Inhibited |
| — False Modesty | — Insecurity |

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intemperance | <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Centered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Confidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loner | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Depreciation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low Self-Discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Gratification (obsessions) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low Self-Worth | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Hatred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lust for Pleasure | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Indulgence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Materialistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Justification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must Strive to <i>Repay</i> Any Kindness Shown You | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Pity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negativism | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Reliant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Righteousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occult (involved in) | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Sufficient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opinionated | <input type="checkbox"/> Selfish Ambition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overly Quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overly Sensitive to Criticism | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Lust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overly Submissive | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow to Forgive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passivity | <input type="checkbox"/> Stubbornness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionist | <input type="checkbox"/> Temper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice | <input type="checkbox"/> Too Quick to Speak |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pride | <input type="checkbox"/> Unlovely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vanity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Projecting Blame | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prone to Gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> Workaholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellion at Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Worrier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resentment | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness | |

These patterns were generated by the “old man” (or sometimes by the new man walking in carnality) while striving to get your needs met. Though the old man died (Romans 6:6), the patterns you checked still remain in your brain. These constitute an approximation of your version of the flesh.

Remember now, this inventory is no longer *you* if you are born again. God says, “From now on we recognize no [one] according to the flesh” (2 Corinthians 5:16). He recognizes you by your new identity in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).