

Alignment (Week 7)

Small Group Lesson

A first time flier was a little nervous about his upcoming flight to a business meeting. An intellectual, he did as much research as possible to educate himself about the principles of flight. In his mind he had played out a conversation with the pilot. Upon boarding, he would give the pilot a quick quiz just to make sure he was capable of bringing him safely to his destination. On the day of the trip fear overtook this otherwise confident man. He clutched his "Principles of Flight" manual in a nervous death grip as he stepped through the doorway. When the pilot saw this first time passenger with his book, sweat on his brow, fear in his eyes, fearful and unable to say a word, he looked at him, smiled, directed with his index finger and said "Wheels on the bottom and tail on top, right?" Being in Alignment means bringing ourselves and things around us into their proper order, function and specifications. Everything has a purpose and will perform the best when it is in its proper place. Wheels on the bottom, tail on top!

The Believer and the Law (Romans 7)

The Jewish people had allowed the law to become their master. They had even created more laws to enforce the original commands just to make sure they were not breaking them. The more they tried to obey the more bound they became. In this lesson we will look at three different types of men. The Spiritual man, The Natural Man and The Carnal Man and how they relate to the Ten Commandments.

The Spiritual Man - "Dead to the Law" (v. 1-6)

Who is the spiritual man? He is one who looks at life from a different perspective. He knows he is a child of God and because of that he looks at life from God's point of view. He knows that he was once bound but now he is free. Paul uses the first part of this chapter to illustrate to us that the correct way to look at the Law is that we are "dead to it." We were once bound to the law but now like a woman whose husband has died, we no longer live for it.

The spiritual man understands this and seeks to live in the "new way of the Spirit" (v. 6). We understand that Jesus lived and fulfilled the law and so it has no power over us. People who try to live by the law are constantly living under condemnation because it is impossible for us to obey all of those rules. When we realize that Christ came and fulfilled the law, we are no longer living for the law but for Jesus. The law is under His feet.

Alignment Question: Do you consider yourself a spiritual man? In what areas are you seeking to see things from God's perspective and not your own?

The Natural Man - “Dead by the Law” (v. 7-13)

A man who is lost (away from God) is weighed down and dead by the law. It is like a weight of guilt that makes him hunger for freedom from it. He looks at the law (these rules from the Ten Commandments) and says: “I can’t possibly follow all these. I will never get out from under the law.” The Apostle Paul tells you here that they were not given to weigh you down but to show you that you need a savior (vs. 7). How would you know if you were speeding unless there is a speed limit sign?

The Law of God was given so that a natural, lost person would know they are a sinner and spiritually dead. “Do not covet” (the 10th commandment) means “do not want to sin,” something none of us could ever keep!

At what age am I responsible for this truth? I am accountable for my sin when I understand the commandment and break it anyway (v. 9). The law helps us to know that we are “utterly sinful” (v. 13).

Alignment Question: Do you remember the moment when you realized “I can’t do this on my own.”? What was it like when you realized your need for a savior?

The Carnal Man “Dead under the Law” (v. 14-25)

The Carnal man feels that he has to keep the law in order to be saved. For him it is all about performing well to try to obtain God’s approval. The law is like a weight on his shoulders. In his mind he must keep the law to be saved. Verses 7-13 are in the past tense; verses 14-25 are all in the present tense. These verses describe Paul after he was saved, trying to keep the Law perfectly. In these verses he explains the frustrations of the battle between the spirit that wants to do what is right and the flesh that wants to do the contrary. The carnal believer is in a war within himself. He is trying to do right, but the sin nature within him constantly overcomes him so that he cannot do what he really wants to do. Verse 20-23 “Who?” (v. 24) is a direct reference to the Holy Spirit, the one who will deliver us from our sin nature! Paul is asking the question as a carnal Christian who is living trying to keep the law. Legalism is a bondage. The law is a burden to my conscience. If I walk under the law I wake up every morning saying “Well it is time to be a Christian again.”

Application

Which Man are you?

We have all at one time or the other identified with each of these three men. In the light of these scriptures which man do you most closely identify with? In our next lesson we will explore what it means to walk with the Spirit of God and be delivered from condemnation. Let this week be a week of self inspection. Ask yourself;

- Am I Spiritual, Natural or Carnal in my walk with God?
- Am I consistent or do I sometimes fall back?

- How can I walk a life of consistency with God?

Leader: Take time to pray for the men in your group and encourage them to join together for an outreach to your community or an individual in need.