



UPPER ROOM
FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

urfm.org/

URFM is a **Spiritual Teaching** and **Christian Counseling** ministry
Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Timothy 2:2

Flesh Patterns and Coping Mechanisms

Introduction

My book, “The Journey of Transformation,” is available on Amazon.

<https://amzn.to/3nB4aR7> .

In this book, I have dedicated an entire chapter titled: Chapter 6: “Sarx Blocks Spiritual Metamorphosis.” In my opinion, every Christian should have a deep and accurate knowledge of the flesh (Gr. sarx). So, it would be very beneficial to get this book just to read/study at least this chapter. You will thank me later.

What is “flesh”

Late Bill Gillham, in his classic book *Lifetime Guarantee*, writes:

“Flesh refers to the old ways or patterns by which you have attempted to get all your needs supplied instead of seeking Christ first and trusting Him to meet your needs. These patterns develop as you are growing up in your parents’ home.”[i]

Overview

We arrived in this world with an empty canvas. Growing up, we have various experiences, good, bad, and in between. It is not the experiences themselves but the interpretations we internalized that shape our belief system. From day one, parents, siblings, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, and others painted on our canvas with whatever they taught us, with what they said to us in love or in anger, and with the good or bad behavior they modeled in front of us. By the age of seven, about 85% of our canvas is covered with various lines, wide, narrow, and in between, and multiple pictures, in color or black and white. For the rest of our lives, we carry this canvas with us.

The wide lines form a strong grid, called core beliefs[ii]. Not all core beliefs are bad or inaccurate; it is a mixture of lie-based beliefs, truth-based beliefs, and in between. It seems that we are eating from the tree of knowledge

of good and evil all over again. The core beliefs are the very center of how we see ourselves, the world, God, other people, and the future. Our core beliefs form the lens through which we interpret life, make decisions, and base our self-esteem.

How are Christians supposed to deal with sarx?

Later in life, we heard the gospel, and the Holy Spirit convicted us of our sin and aroused in us a need for a Savior. By faith (Romans 10:8–10), we accept Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; we are born again, and we become “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, God does not send any archangel to “erase” our canvas. We come into God’s family with our “grid,” the way it has been painted on our canvas from day one until we met Jesus (and even after). From that point on, until we meet Jesus face-to-face, we enter into the process called progressive sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). The living Word of God and the Holy Spirit, with our full cooperation, are diligently working to renew our minds—metanoia[iii] (Romans 12:2), and transform our character—metamorphosis[iv] (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Entering a lifelong process

If we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, God is committed to using every life experience: school, family, work, successes, failures, sickness, and so on, to help us become conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28–30). The Lord can use our entire spectrum of negative emotions: anger, depression, confusion, helplessness, indifference, fear, hurt, sadness, and so on, to expose the fleshly patterns buried deep down inside of us. These lie-based beliefs are like scales over our eyes, preventing us from seeing and experiencing God’s truth and His love.

These life-based beliefs have an irresistible pull in our lives to live independently of God. In time, as we position ourselves to receive God’s transformative truth, these lie-based beliefs, upon exposure, are irradiated by God’s Light—Jesus (Ephesians 5:13). All of a sudden, the lie-based beliefs, one by one, lose their influence on us. The revealed truth of God’s Word shines over our canvas (Ephesians 5:14, 2 Corinthians 4:3–6), and the wide lie-based lines, one by one, are erased and replaced with strong truth-based lines. Praise God! And the process continues.

Now, in all the transformed areas, we can serve God and others in newness of the Spirit (Romans 7:6). In a sense, this is the way we are supposed to crucify (Strong #G4717 σταυρώω)[v] the flesh so that we can walk according to our core identity—dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11).

This process is not our attempt to improve ourselves or a new positive psychology technique. This is a spiritual process based on our cooperation with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, through which our fleshly patterns (lie-based beliefs and coping mechanisms) are identified and exposed so we can bring them to the cross to be crucified (Gr. σταυρώω) that the truth may come in and shine in our hearts. This is the power of the Gospel: “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Do you know your “version” of flesh/sarx?

I want to ask you a simple question. When you squeeze something: a fruit or a toothpaste tube, what comes

out? Of course, the answer is that under pressure, what is inside comes out. Similarly, when we are under pressure, we manifest what is inside of us, the deeds of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit.

In the process of progressive sanctification, God—the Vinedresser (John 15:1), orchestrates all sorts of situations that apply pressure on us, squeezing us. The squeezing is not meant to hurt us, ruin our lives, or make us miserable, though many times it feels precisely like that. God’s purpose in using various forms of pain is to help us realize what is within us, enabling us to see the real source and motivation in our lives: the flesh or the Spirit.

As these fleshly patterns, false beliefs, and coping mechanisms are exposed, we are in a much better position to agree and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in mind renewal, resulting in spiritual transformation. The result of the entire process is true sanctification. Paul explains clearly: “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Romans 6:19). This process of transformation is not passive; it requires our active participation and self-assessment.

Take the Assessment

I highly encourage you to take the *“Flesh Patterns Self-Assessment Test.”* Download the PDF file. Follow the instructions.

Important! To be told, to benefit from the Flesh Patterns Self-Assessment Test fully, we need to process the findings with a well-trained Pastor, a certified Life Coach, or an experienced Spiritual Mentor. Do not delay; please schedule a Pastoral Counseling, Life Coaching, or Discipleship and Mentorship session.

One by one, flesh pattern by flesh pattern, lie-based belief by lie-based belief, one wrong motive after another, is brought to the light. When these things are no longer hidden and are exposed by Christ’s powerful, transformative Light and Truth, their influence over us is broken. (See Ephesians 5:8, 11, 13).

You are now ready to take the self-assessment. Begin the assessment process with prayer:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.” (Psalm 139:23–24)

Proceed in a posture of meditation, being open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Action Item:

Please schedule a virtual meeting with me to process the results.

With love in the service of Christ,

Valy Vaduva

Board Certified Pastoral Counselor (BCPC) and Master Mental Health Coach (BCMMHC)

© 2025 by Valy Vaduva

Endnotes:

[i] Bill Gillham, *Lifetime Guarantee*, (Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, 1993), 16.

[ii] Rhena Branch, Rob Willson, *Core Beliefs and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, “Your core beliefs are ideas or philosophies that you hold very strongly and very deeply. These ideas are usually developed in childhood or early in adult life.” Accessed on July 23, 2021. <https://www.dummies.com/health/mental-health/core-beliefs-and-cognitive-behavioural-therapy/>.

[iii] Metanoia: change of mind, repentance. Original Word: μετάνοια. Strong #G3341. Short Definition: repentance, a change of mind, a change in the inner man. Accessed on October 12, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/greek/3341.htm>.

[iv] Metamorphosis: “1: (a) Change of physical form, structure, or substance, especially by supernatural means. (b) A striking alteration in appearance, character, or circumstances.” www.merriam-webster.com. Accessed on July 23, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metamorphosis>.

[v] Stauroo, Strong #G4717, verb: to crucify, to crucify one, metaphorically: to crucify the flesh, destroy its power utterly (the nature of the figure implying that the destruction is attended with intense pain). Accessed on July 23, 2021. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/stauroo.html>.