

# Spiritual Contagion Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, June 7, 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today. Whether you are here IN-PERSON or watching via the LIVESTREAM, you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time, as I present part two of our three-part series.

## SUMMATIONS PT. 1

**FYI** – Last week I likened the operation and spread of sinful spiritual conditions of the heart to the workings of a natural CONTAGION (e.g., Ebola, Smallpox, Covid-19). I do NOT have the time today to offer a thorough summation of said message, so please feel free to watch/listen to part one on this Facebook page or the church website ([www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org)).

**KEY** – In the way of SUMMARY, I will posit the following...

### 1) There Exists Many Sinful Spiritual Conditions of the Heart

We can be GIVEN to debilitating sp. dysfunctions (e.g., despair, negativity, fear, disbelief, complaint).

### 2) These Sinful Spiritual Conditions Can Spread Rapidly in a Population

We influence each other MORE than we know, and one person's (-) condition may well prove contagious.

### 3) Left Unchecked, the End Result of (-) Spiritual Contagion Proves Disastrous

When sin is allowed to proliferate, the end result (i.e., wage) is ALWAYS the same—death and divine penalty.

## SUMMATIONS PT. 2

These principles were ILLUSTRATED in the account examined last Sunday (cf. Numbers 13–14)...

**FYI 1** – Twelve men were sent by God through Moses to explore the Promised Land. TEN of that number came down with the debilitating conditions noted above (e.g., negativity, disbelief, fear, etc.). Their words and witness influenced the vast majority of Israel unto sin, as their conditions proved contagious. In just ONE night, the bad report of these ten men impacted 600K–3M individuals! Ultimately this proved DISASTROUS, as God cursed the nation with forty-years of wandering.

**FYI 2** – Those who were twenty-plus would WANDER until they perished (i.e., save for Joshua and Caleb).

**NOTE** – Despite the good reports of Joshua and Caleb, the masses sought to kill Moses and return to slavery in Egypt. Isn't it amazing how we naturally gravitate toward the proverbial bad report (i.e., to that which is contrary to the Lord) v. that which is faith-filled, holy and good? This reveals MUCH re: human nature!

## SUMMATIONS PT. 3

This discussion led to a vital Q that I want to explore today (i.e., picking up where we left off)...

**Q. How do we rise above the sinful influences of this world and the inclinations of our fallen nature?**

**Q. How are we to overcome the wicked influences that we experience (i.e., both without and within)?**

**KEY** – These are great questions that are worthy of our time today. LET’S DELVE IN...

## WHAT NOT TO DO PT. 1

To begin, I would like to touch upon what NOT to do (i.e., offering a word of caution)...

**FYI 1** – Throughout history, the Church has always sought to respond to this issue in a MONASTIC manner. “Since this world is so bad—and since we are so given to sin—it would be best to retreat from the world and cloister ourselves, creating a holy haven wherein we can grow in the Lord!”

**FYI 2** – For many centuries this manifested in the literal building of MONASTERIES, etc., wherein believers have found shelter from the evil influences of their age (refusing to venture beyond their walls). In recent times this has taken on a more spiritual form, as churches invest themselves COMPLETELY in the work of discipling the saved but NOT in the work of reaching the lost!

**FYI 3** – A great many in the modern church prefer the comfort and security of their mid-week studies and Sunday services (rarely venturing beyond their four walls), sequestered from the wickedness of the earth! “Let’s focus on ourselves/inwardly as it is not safe to reach out,” they say! (i.e., Holy Huddle).

**KEY** – This mindset is WRONG on so many levels...

## WHAT NOT TO DO PT. 2

### 1) It is Not in Line with Jesus’ Example

Study the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and you will see Him among the sinful masses. He was known as the “friend of sinners” (cf. Matt. 11:16–19) and accessible to them. He was CONTINUALLY walking the highways and byways of this earth, seeking and saving those who were lost (cf. Luke 19:10).

**Q. How can we claim to follow Christ and not follow the example that He left behind (i.e., for ministry)?**

**Q. How can we claim conformity to His image (Rom. 8:28) if we refuse conformity in so critical an area?**

### 2) It is Not in Line with His Instruction/Teaching

**Matthew 28:19–20 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)**

19 . . . **GO** and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**QUOTE** – “A church that does NOT work to reach the lost is LOST itself” (R. Bonnke).

## TRANSITIONS

**KEY** – Monasticism (i.e., literally or spiritually) is NOT a biblical response to the issue at hand.

So once again...

**Q. How do we rise above the sinful influences of this world and the inclinations of our fallen nature?**

**Q. How are we to overcome the wicked influences that we experience (i.e., both without and within)?**

Let's explore some biblical, proactive RESPONSES to these overarching questions...

### WHAT TO DO PT. 1

#### 1) Recognize the Reality of Our Sinful Inclinations

If you EVER hope to effectively navigate this world and its influences, you MUST understand your own sinful nature (i.e., flesh). There will ALWAYS be a part of you—no matter how long you walk with the Lord—that will want to do that which is contrary to the will and ways of God! i.e., Some inner part of your being will continually GRAVITATE toward that which inspires negativity, fear, anxiety, doubt, complaint, etc. (like a moth to the flame)!

**KEY** – Scripture makes this INCREDIBLY clear—consider the following selection...

#### **Galatians 5:16–17, 19–21a**

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. . . . 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Knowing this we MUST...

### WHAT TO DO PT. 2

#### 2) Take Mastery Over Our Sinful Inclinations

**NOTE** – You CAN overcome your sinful inclinations through the instruction found within this very passage...

#### **Galatians 5:16 (Emphasis Mine)**

16 So I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will **not** gratify the desires of the flesh.

**NOTE 1** – To walk by the Spirit is to live under the INFLUENCE/AUTHORITY of the Spirit

**NOTE 2** – To walk by the Spirit is to live according to the POWER He so READILY supplies.

**KEY** – When you submit to Him, He empowers you to OVERCOME those instincts that produce (cf. Gal. 5:19–21), cultivating a life abounding with love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control (cf. Gal. 5:22–23a). This is good and pleases God our Savior!

## WHAT TO DO PT. 3

**FYI** – I would like to ELABORATE upon some of these themes with a look at Proverbs 4:23...

### **Proverbs 4:23**

Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.

### **Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV)**

23 Keep your heart with all diligence,  
For out of it spring the issues of life.

**NOTE** – Consider the phrase “above all else” (v. 23a). This indicates that guarding your heart is to be of **UTMOST** priority. It is **NOT** something that we are to be casual or negligent with. Why? Because the entirety of our lives (i.e., our words, thoughts, deeds, etc.) flow from this place. It is the **WELLSPRING** of life!

### **Q. What are we do “above all else”?**

**A.** We are ordered to **GUARD** our hearts.

## WHAT TO DO PT. 4

### **Q. What does this mean? To GUARD?**

**A.** There are **TWO** aspects to this term...

**A1** – “To keep under close watch in order to prevent escape or misconduct”

As we have noted, be aware that your heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (cf. Jer. 17:9)—desiring to stray. It’s like the One Ring from LOTR—it wants to be found! Therefore, treat it like a **CONVICT** that wants to escape to commit more criminality. Do **NOT** follow your heart—rather, **GUARD** that thing!

**KEY** – **DISCIPLINE** yourself and beat it (i.e., figuratively) into submission...

### **1 Corinthians 9:27 (NIV)**

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

**KEY** – **a)** When you hear gossip and want to pass it on; **b)** When you hear a negative report and want to abandon belief; **c)** when bad news causes you to want to lose your joy/victory; **d)** when the opposition you’re facing convinces you it’s time to retreat (i.e., Goliath, etc.) – **STOP**...

...Take responsibility/guard your heart. You don’t have to succumb—you don’t have to be influenced unto sin!

ALONG THESE LINES...

## WHAT TO DO PT. 5

Take some responsibility for your attitude and emotions. The world may be FULL of negative influences, but you do NOT have to give in. i.e., If it is certainly FULL of (-) spiritual conditions you do NOT have to get infected...

**KEY** – You may NOT be able to control your world, but you CAN control your response to it!

**FYI** – We are NOT to be subject to our thought life and feelings—they are subject to us in Christ. I am NOT saying that we don't feel or feel deeply (cf. Psalms). I am saying that we must control what we do with our emotions/thoughts in a biblical fashion! Consider the following passage...

### **Psalms 42:11**

11 Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

## WHAT TO DO PT. 6

**Q. What else does it mean to guard our heart?**

**A2** – “To keep safe from harm; to protect or watch over.”

**FYI 1** – There really is an ENEMY out there and you must be on guard against him and his ways (EXTERNAL)

### **1 Peter 5:8–9a**

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith . . .

**FYI 2** – This enemy UNDERSTANDS your areas of weakness/susceptibility and will work to EXPLOIT them! Do you know the gaps in your armor and patterns of struggle? HE DOES. In light of this, he may use friends, family, etc., to afflict and lead you ASTRAY. e.g., It's like the drunk who comes to Christ, and now his friends are always him to come to the bar!

You must navigate—guard against—such connections and circumstances CAREFULLY...

**NOTE 1** – As noted earlier, you cannot hide from this world or cloister yourself. But you must also consider the degree to which you immerse yourself in it, always considering precisely who is influencing whom. BALANCE! It's a good thing to want to win your friends/peers to Christ, but are they being used to pull you away?

**NOTE 2** – I call you to consider the example of Christ Himself. Note that He was always IN this world and a friend to sinners, but not OF the world. He would at times retreat to spend time with intimate believers and/or pray, resting, reorienting, and readying Himself for further ministry.

**KEY** – Ultimately, it is up to YOU to take some mastery (i.e., dominion) over yourself in Christ!

## WHAT TO DO PT. 7

Thus far we've learned that we can...

- 1) Recognize the Reality of Our Sinful Inclinations
- 2) Take Mastery Over Our Sinful/Fallen Inclinations

**KEY** – We Can ALSO...

### 3) Practice Eff. Spiritual Disciplines (cf. Philippians 4)

#### Philippians 4:4–8

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

**NOTE** – Consider the commands of Paul in this text (given by the Spirit of God). Wealth of wisdom!

## WHAT TO DO PT. 8

**KEY 1** – REJOICE

#### Philippians 4:4 (Emphasis Mine)

4 **Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: **Rejoice**!

In many ways praise and worship are the best spiritual PPE/mask to mitigate spiritual contagion! It is HARD to come down with a case of doubt, negativity, fear, defeat, etc., WHEN you are focusing upon, celebrating and in the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

**KEY 2** – PRAY

#### Philippians 4:6–7 (Emphasis Mine)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by **prayer** and **petition**, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Show me a Christian given to a spirit of fear, worry, etc., and I will show you one that is NOT praying in this manner! It is HARD to come down with such sinful spiritual conditions WHEN you are communing with Him, making your needs known and hearing His heart on your earthly circumstances!

### KEY 3 – THANKSGIVING

#### Philippians 4:6–7 (Emphasis Mine)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

It is really HARD to find a Christian given to a spirit of complaint or murmur WHILE expressing gratitude toward God. It is HARD to come down with life-sapping spiritual conditions of the heart WHEN you are conveying your gratitude to God for what He has done, what He is doing and what He purposes to do!

### WHAT TO DO PT. 9

#### Q1. What if the ten spies practiced a little praise, prayer and thanksgiving? ELABORATE

i.e., What if—when feeling the pull of pessimism, doubt, disbelief, defeat etc.)—they practiced these?

#### Q2. What if Israel practiced praise, prayer and thanksgiving upon the bad report? ELABORATE

i.e., What if—upon hearing the bad report of the ten spies—the community decided to practice these?

A. They would have risen above their negative instincts and influences and entered the PL v. perish!

Q. What if you practice a little more praise, prayer and thanksgiving?

### WHAT TO DO PT. 10

### KEY 4 – FOCUS

#### Philippians 4:8 (Emphasis Mine)

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things**.

**NOTE** – Be careful what you FOCUS/DWELL upon. Be careful the REPORTS that you entertain. Remember, the people of God were NOT judged for hearing the bad report of the ten spies. They were judged for hearing it, believing it, and then allowing it to take PRECEDENCE over the promise of God!

Q. What if they dwelt upon the promise of God v. the bad report of the ten spies?

Q. What if they gave a closer consideration to the words/remarks of Caleb and Joshua?

Q. What if they focused upon that which was true, right, pure, holy. that which was contrary?

**FYI** – You determine what you focus and/or dwell upon. YOU have a choice! Whose report will you believe?

## WHAT TO DO PT. 11

**ILL** – Many fail to hold themselves responsible for the character of their thoughts, seeing them as unreal or fanciful, not taking them seriously. But our thoughts do affect our character. Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, famous for its splendid masonry of solid rock, is the result of nature's slow, silent process. The steady dripping of water from the cavern's roof forms enormous pillars. One drop of water, falling from the ceiling, deposits its sediment. Others follow, each drop adding its contribution until the icicle of stone begins to grow, ultimately reaching the rock beneath, becoming a massive pillar.

Each of our hearts displays a similar process. A thought may stir only momentarily, but sink into the soul, unconsciously making its deposit. Other thoughts follow, forming habits of thought, erecting within us monuments of purpose or pillars of abomination. Our characters are affected forever, being made of petrified thoughts.

## SUMMATIONS

**Q. How do we rise above the sinful influences of this world and the inclinations of our fallen nature?**  
**Q. How are we to overcome the wicked influences that we experience (i.e., both without and within)?**

- A1)** Recognize the Reality of Our Sinful Inclinations
- A2)** Take Mastery Over Our Sinful/Fallen Inclinations
- A3)** Practice Eff. Spiritual Disciplines (cf. Philippians 4)

## CONCLUSION

**KEY** – Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church WEBSITE ([www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org)). For those who are present, you may place your donation in the OFFERING BOXES in this Sanctuary.

### Numbers 6:24–26

- 24 The Lord bless you  
and keep you;
- 25 the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;
- 26 the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.