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Many Scriptures are referenced throughout. You are encouraged to look up these references for a better understanding.

**Question: "What is a carnal Christian?"**

**Answer:**

Can a true Christian be carnal? In answering this question, let's first define the term "carnal." The word "carnal" is translated from the Greek word *sarkikos*, which literally means "fleshly." This descriptive word is seen in the context of Christians in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. In this passage, the apostle Paul is addressing the readers as "brethren," a term he uses almost exclusively to refer to other Christians; he then goes on to describe them as "carnal." Therefore, we can conclude that Christians can be carnal. The Bible is absolutely clear that no one is sinless (1 John 1:8). Every time we sin, we are acting carnally.

The key thing to understand is that while a Christian can be, for a time, carnal, a true Christian will not remain carnal for a lifetime. Some have abused the idea of a "carnal Christian" by saying that it is possible for people to come to faith in Christ and then proceed to live the rest of their lives in a completely carnal manner, with no evidence of being born again or a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Such a concept is completely unbiblical. James 2 makes it abundantly clear that genuine faith will always result in good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 declares that while we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, that salvation will result in works. Can a Christian, in a time of failure and/or rebellion, appear to be carnal? Yes. Will a true Christian remain carnal? No.

Since eternal security is a fact of Scripture, even the carnal Christian is still saved. Salvation cannot be lost, because salvation is a gift of God that He will not take away (see John 10:28; Romans 8:37-39; 1 John 5:13). Even in 1 Corinthians 3:15, the carnal Christian is assured of salvation: "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." The question is not whether a person who claims to be a Christian but lives carnally has lost his salvation, but whether that person was truly saved in the first place (1 John 2:19).

Christians who become carnal in their behavior can expect God to lovingly discipline them (Hebrews 12:5-11) so they can be restored to close fellowship with Him and be trained to obey Him. God's desire in saving us is that we would progressively grow closer to the image of Christ (Romans 12:1-2), becoming increasingly spiritual and decreasingly carnal, a process known as sanctification. Until we are delivered from our sinful flesh, there will be outbreaks of carnality. For a genuine believer in Christ, though, these outbreaks of carnality will be the exception, not the rule.

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Wrap up your study on this chapter by prayerfully considering the following questions:

1. Am I completely satisfied with the Father's management of my life?
2. Am I a carnal Christian?
3. Are the problems I have in my life because of the drama I have created from being discontent with God's provision – spiritually, as well as, materially? (Consider Keller's story of his ewe on pages 37-38.)
4. Is the example I'm setting an example that is teaching others wrongly about the provisions my Savior provides?