

The Battle

I fought this particular battle many times. And I've watched many other moms fight it too. It happens every day in grocery checkout lines all over the world. The preschooler wants candy. The mom does not want the preschooler to have candy. And so the battle begins.

The preschoolers fight with every weapon in their arsenal - tears, pleadings, promises of good behavior, and even temper tantrums. Moms draw the line to defend healthy teeth and a nutritious diet. Who will win?

Sometimes the mom wins. Sometimes the kid wins. The outcome depends on willpower and determination. The kids have an advantage because they don't care how many people stare and whisper. They value the candy much more than their self-respect. Sometimes the battle-weary mom just wants to get out of the store alive, even if that means giving in. At least she will live to fight another day.

The candy battle in the checkout line is a minor skirmish compared to the spiritual battle going on inside every Christian. Our sinful human nature wants to satisfy our selfish desires. The indwelling Holy Spirit calls us to follow Him. Who will win?

Plant: The two sides in this spiritual battle

Read Galatians 5:16-18. Describe this spiritual battle in your own words.

Let's identify the sides in this battle. Paul says the *Spirit* wants one thing and the *sinful nature* (some translations use *flesh*) wants another. The Greek word *pneuma*, translated as "Spirit," can also be translated as "breath" or "wind." Like the wind, the Holy Spirit is an unseen but "powerful force with visible effects" (*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary*). "Sinful nature" or "flesh" is the Greek word *sarx*. Although this word primarily referred to the physical body, Christians also used it to describe our fallen, sinful nature. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* describes this usage: "Sarx came to mean all the evil that man is and is capable of apart from the intervention of God's grace in his life."

Cultivate: Greater is He that is in us

Read Ephesians 1:18-21. How powerful is the Holy Spirit that lives within you? (Check all that apply.)

- Incomparably great*
- God's mighty strength*
- Powerful enough to raise the dead*
- More powerful than any earthly authority*

Unfortunately, our sinful nature still exists. But praise God, we have a weapon of unlimited power on our side. The same power that raised Christ from the dead lives inside every believer! We have the power to resist our fleshly desires through the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. "The one who is in you, is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4, NIV).

The Holy Spirit does not immunize us against temptation – rather, He enables us to withstand temptation. He imparts to us the ability to turn away from all things that are contrary to God's plan and purpose for our lives. Charles Stanley, Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Read the following verses and record God's promises to you.

2 Peter 1:3-4 –

1 Corinthians 10:13 -

Grow: Follow the Spirit

We do *not* have to give in to sin. Our fleshly nature does not have to win. Jesus' death and resurrection broke Satan's death grip on us. Satan can appeal to our sinful desires, but his power over us is limited. We have a greater power at work in us.

Look back at Galatians 5:16-19. We have a choice to make. What is it?

We can choose to refuse our sinful nature. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit supplies us with the power to be obedient to God. We can choose God's "way out." The question is: will we succumb to the call of our flesh or will we yield to the Holy Spirit and walk in His power?

Let's talk: Think about the last time you faced a spiritual battle. What was it? Did you allow your flesh to win or did you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit? If you gave in to sin, can you identify the "way out" God offered?