

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Instincts are innate behaviors common to the various divisions and classes of physical life such as humans, animals, birds, etc. For example, animal (mammals, birds, reptiles, etc.) have instincts usually consisting of the following:

- Survival—Drive to preserve life and promote reproduction.
- Language—Ability to communicate with their own species.
- Maternal—Drive to care for and protect their young.
- Herding—Drive to move in groups especially as a response to threats.
- Migratory—Drive to move from one place to another.

In addition to animal instincts, people have generally attributable *instinctual behaviors*:

- Anger—Response to stress, frustration, injustice, threats (situations with the potential for harm from intentional or malicious acts), etc.
- Fear—Response to harm or danger (situations with the potential for harm regardless of intent).
- Panic-Grief—Response to separation from a loved one.
- Care—Drive to connect with others out of compassion.
- Seeking—Drive to explore the environment in order to meet their needs.
- Curiosity—Drive to explore and learn without a particular need.
- Play—Drive to engage in recreational activities for enjoyment.
- Pleasure/Lust—Drive for satisfaction, enjoyment, happiness, or pain avoidance.

Animals can exhibit some of these instinctual behaviors, usually within a domestic environment that removes threats and dangers, but they are secondary to their base instincts. An example might be when the family pet dog suddenly bites its owner without provocation. Unbeknownst to the owner, something could have momentarily triggered the survival instinct. The important point is that animal instincts are inherent and consistent throughout their lives and rarely 'unlearned'.

Human instinctual behaviors, on the other hand, can be learned or modified over their lifetimes, hence the reason I call them *instinctual behaviors*. For example, babies generally must be taught to share their toys with other children to teach them to care about others. Adults can learn to control or overcome fears as in the case of a phobia like heights or spiders. Unlike animals, humans can override their basic 'animal' instincts with instinctual behaviors. One example is superseding survival instinct with fear. Some soldiers lose all fear while others are overcome by fear even when they are no longer in the threat environment. (Animals rarely exhibit these behaviors outside of a threat environment. Military service dogs are trained to ignore the *sounds* of war so that they do not associate them with threats or dangers whereas human soldiers always know that the sound of a bullet being discharged correlates with a direct threat.)

Human instinctual behaviors have both positive and negative aspects. They are negative when they focus on the self to the exclusion of others. Marital intercourse seeks to please both whereas adultery is strictly selfish, and is pursued without regard to the pleasure of their sexual 'partner' or the betrayal of others. Biblically, instinctual behaviors are called "works of the flesh." Paul's list focused on the negative instinctual behaviors:

GALATIANS 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: **adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries,** and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Instinctual behaviors are what define the "natural man" and make flesh so distinctly different from the Spirit:

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 But **the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God,** for they are foolishness to him; **nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

The natural man does not "receive" the things of the spirit. While it could have been translated *accept*, accepting something requires the consent of the recipient. An award is *accepted* but a punishment is *received*. The reason the Greek is not translated *accept* is that the things of the spirit are contrary to human instinctual behaviors. In other words, people do not RECEIVE the things of the spirit since they must CONSENT to them. The "things of the Spirit of God" are so contrary to the instinctual behaviors of the natural man that they *cannot* accept them:

GALATIANS 5:17 For the **flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another,** so that you do not do the things that you wish.

So, what exactly are the "things of the Spirit of God¹?"

- Agape Love—Quality and trait of affection and desire for others; supplying the needs of others; longsuffering or even kindness for enemies.
- Joy²—Qualities and traits of cheerfulness and calm delight.
- Peace³—Qualities and traits of tranquility and calm.
- Longsuffering—Quality and trait of patience while under affliction.
- Kindness—Qualities and traits of friendliness, generosity, and consideration.
- Goodness—Qualities and traits of righteousness and virtuousness.
- Faithfulness—Qualities and traits of fidelity and loyalty.

¹ Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12-13.

² 1 Pet. 1:8; John 17:13; Acts 2:28.

³ Phil. 4:7; John 14:7.

- Meekness—Quality and trait of gentleness especially toward people.
- Self-Control—Qualities and traits of self-discipline and self-restraint.
- Compassion—Qualities and traits of sympathy and pity toward suffering.
- Humility—Qualities and traits of modesty and personal diffidence especially toward God.
- Forebearance—Quality and trait of restraint from exercising a legal right.

These are not *instincts* of the Spirit; instead, they are qualities and traits. A QUALITY is a characteristic that is a standard of excellence defined and revealed by God to mankind from the beginning. A TRAIT is an attribute of quality that must be developed or learned. They are ‘qualities’ of God whereas they are the intended ‘traits’ of those with His Spirit. The Bible calls them fruits because they begin as seeds planted in the heart and mind that must be attended in order to grow into nourishing and pleasing fruit that benefits others. All qualities of the Spirit of God benefit others.

They are also qualities of the Spirit of GOD, not spirit beings. One can assume that spirit beings (demons excepted) have these same qualities or traits after they had to make a choice when Satan rebelled but they are probably better called characteristics since they seemingly are no longer subject to change. Spirit beings might be perfect in these things but they are not the standard of excellence. Scripture says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) because He is The Standard of Excellence for agape love (and all other qualities). They come from God through His Spirit, which is the only way anyone can “[become] perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48):

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-14 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But **God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For **what man knows the things of a man except /by/ the spirit of the man** which is in him? Even so **no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.** 12 Now **we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.** 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But **the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God,** for they are foolishness to him; **nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

I think one of the main differences between the spirit in animals and humans⁴ is the latter’s ability to recognize, discern, and modify their instinctual behaviors. People can evaluate and change their behaviors to emphasize or deemphasize their emotional responses toward people and stimuli. However, achieving “things of the Spirit of God” requires His help:

⁴ Ecc. 3:21.

MATTHEW 19:25-26 When His [*Jesus Christ's*] disciples heard *it*, they were greatly astonished, saying, “**Who then can be saved?**” 26 But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, “**With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**”

This, then, is the challenge before us—to have faith and believe that God will, and is, doing this in each of us. All those with the Spirit of God understand the qualities of it and recognize the high standard of excellence to which He calls us. However, the infirmities of the flesh demonstrate daily we fall far short of His glory⁵.

MATTHEW 26:41 “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. **The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**”

It also must be accepted that humans learn and change best with failure, duress, or affliction. Jesus said, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God.” (Matt. 19:17). No flesh—not even the incarnate Christ—can be The Standard of Excellence. That does not mean He sinned, but rather:

HEBREWS 2:10 For it was fitting for Him [*Jesus Christ*], for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**

It was not until after His resurrection that Jesus Christ became Captain and Author of The Standard of Excellence that we strive to imitate. But more than that, He attained it through SUFFERINGS. If He had lived a sinless life and then was quickly and painlessly sacrificed for our sins, He would not have been perfected. What does that mean for us? He fully understands the weakness of the flesh such that He now is the One who intercedes for us with God the Father:

ROMANS 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit also helps in **our weaknesses**. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He [*Jesus Christ*] who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because **He [*Jesus Christ*] makes intercession for the saints** according to *the will of God*.

And that is what the natural man faces in this life—the disappointment and grief that are the result of fleshly weakness to come even close to the character based upon The Standard of Excellence (God). But it is the *perfection* of Jesus Christ that offers a great hope—Jesus Christ intercedes for us *because* we CONTINUALLY STRIVE for that standard of excellence. Our Captain ensures we no longer fall far short but fall under the grace of God!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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⁵ Rom. 3:23.