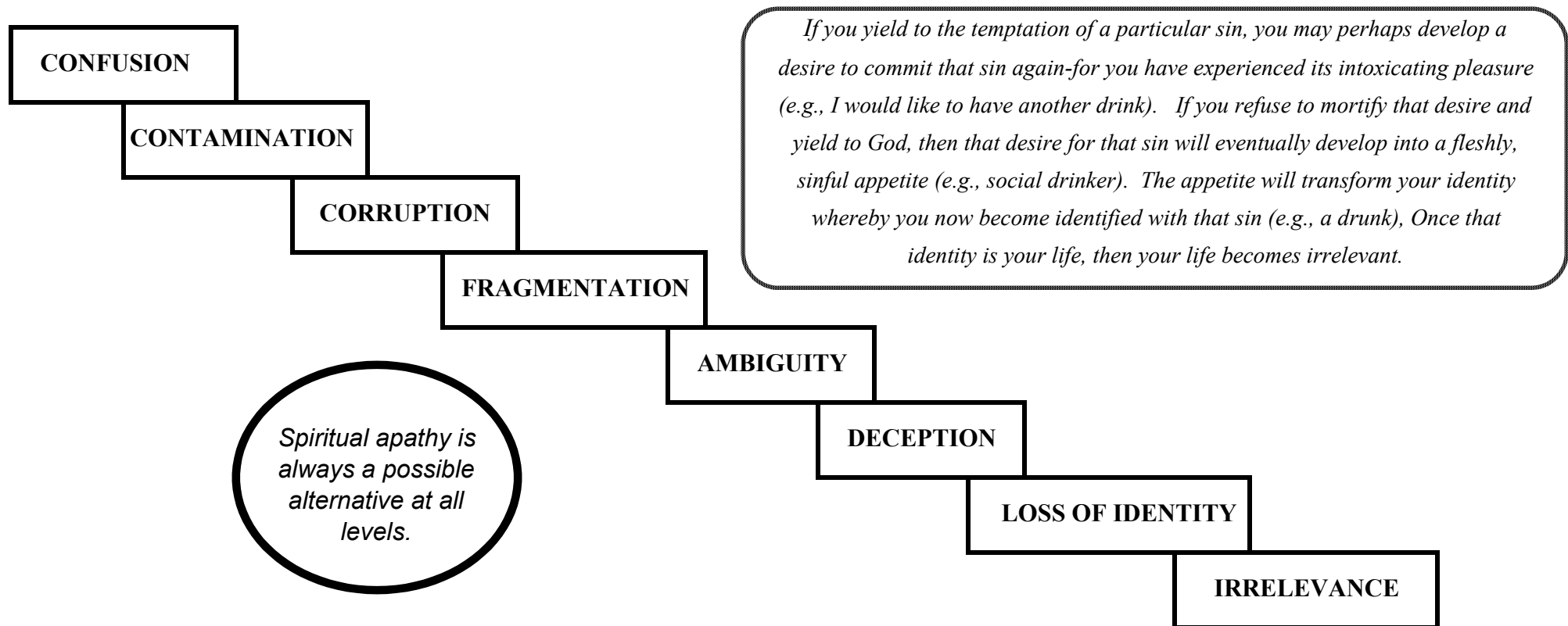


8 DOWNWARD STEPS OF SPIRITUAL DEGENERATION:

What are the *downward* steps if believers fail to flee from sinful desires? Consider the following eight degenerative steps:

www.prshockley.org / Paul R. Shockley, 2008



(1) When a believer doesn't immediately flee from sin, the intoxicating effects of sin will breed spiritual confusion. If confession of sin doesn't soon take place (1 John 1:9), then contamination spreads. Like a weed in a garden, the contamination will begin to spread as you come to develop an appetite for that sin. Once the appetite becomes significant, spiritual corruption will set in. Your thirst to fulfill that sinful appetite will begin to grow, altering your priorities..as if it is growing deep roots & spreading seeds across your garden. Corruption eventually leads to fragmentation; the garden becomes thicker and thicker with weeds. Fragmentation occurs because you have betrayed your new identity in Jesus Christ. Spiritual fragmentation leads to ambiguity. At this level you no longer recognize who you are in Christ - just like your garden is no longer recognizable as a garden. Ambiguity leads to deception. Deception occurs when what you originally rejected you now embrace & what you originally embraced you now mock & scorn; your theological beliefs, values, & duties are turned upside down. When deception sets in, you've lost your God-given identity-representation (e.g., you have lost His authority, distinctiveness, purpose/vision, & unique witness to the world). When you've lost your identity, then you become irrelevant - for your life will not count for something great (1 Cor. 3; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; 2 John 8). At this stage you draw your resources, ideas, & practices from the secular world, the flesh, & the counterfeit kingdom...rotting sources that will one day be destroyed. Your explanatory power as a believer in Jesus Christ is gone (Heb. 6). **(2)** But there is always hope while you have air to breathe - if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, one who has come to receive the free gift of salvation by placing your trust in Jesus, who is God & died on the cross for your sins & rose bodily from the dead (John 3:16). Draw near to God & He will draw near to you. Sincerely confess your sins (1 John 1:9) & yield to God. Yielding is not merely a decision, but a qualitative life of consecration. But it is not merely consecration. It also involves an on-going separation from the world. But it is not merely separation from the world, but an on-going transformation by the renewing of the mind with the Word of God (Romans 12:1-2). Remember, no matter what choice (s) you have made, Jesus Christ is always present, always sufficient, & always necessary; turn to Him. If you do, then you will experience a liberated conscience & a disposition of joy, peace, strength, and thankfulness. The wonder of calvary will become beautiful to you once more & you will begin a new journey that will restructure your character in conformity to our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ as you deal with the consequences of your sin with God's abiding & enduring strength. **(3)** Lastly, please note the following. First, every time you sin, no matter how pleasurable it is, a marring and scarring of sin always takes place. Second, at all stages there is the possibility that you might turn to apathy. Third, regardless if it is apathy or allowing this particular sin to develop into an appetite, appetite into identity, & identity into irrelevance, at all levels you "open the door" for God to chastise you (Heb. 12:1-2). If you don't respond to chastisement, then He will scourge you. If scourging does not foster repentance, then He might take you on home.