

Fight Club *fighting the flesh with faith*

What is a Fight Club?

Fight Clubs are small, simple groups of 2-3 who meet regularly to help one another beat the flesh and believe in the promises of God. Men meet with men, and women meet with women, in order effectively address gender-specific issues head-on. The idea of Fight Club comes from Chuck Palahniuk's book by the same name, popularized by the film starring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton. Palahniuk's *Fight Club* depicts the struggle to recover identity in a postmodern, media-saturated world, charged with bogus images of what it means to be truly human. In the fight clubs, groups of men meet after hours in a basement to fight one another barefoot, bare-chested, and bare-fisted. It's a bloody ordeal. In a [speech](#) just prior to a fight club, Tyler Durden charges the men:

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We are the middle children of history, man. No purpose or place. We have no great war, or great depression. Our great war is a spiritual war. Our great depression is our lives. We've all been raised by television to believe that one day we'll all be millionaires and movie gods and rock stars — but we won't.

In this speech, Durden pinpoints something that should confront Christians every day—the great depression of a life lived in the flesh. Christians are tempted daily to believe the empty promises of the millionaire, movie god, and rock star lifestyles. We are tempted to believe that if we had a little more money, power, notoriety, respect, success or whatever, we would be truly happy. Durden calls us out of our depressive, fleshly lives into the rewarding fight of faith, out of the great depression to a great war, a spiritual war. That spiritual war is a war against the flesh, that lingering vestige of our pre-Christian lives that must be beat to death so that we can live in the fullness of life given to us in Jesus (Rom 8:13). Durden isn't the only one calling us to fight. The apostle Paul says: *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Tim 6:12). We are beat the flesh in the power of the Spirit: *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”* (Rom 8:13). These texts call us to “fight” and “put to death” the deeds of the body, our sinful patterns of anxiety, self-pity, anger, fear of man, vanity, pride, lust, greed, and so on. Upon becoming a Christian, we are inducted into a fight club, the Fight Club of faith.

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What are the “Rules” of Fight Club?

Durden lays down eight rules for the Fight Club. The first two are: “You do not talk about fight club.” We are breaking those rules in an effort to help Christians escape the dangers of a life lived in the flesh. What are the ground rules for our Fight Club? I suggest three: 1) Know Your Sin. 2) Fight your Sin. 3) Trust your Savior. Let’s go.

Three “Rules” of Fight Club:

1. *Know your Sin*
2. *Fight your Sin*
3. *Trust your Savior*

1. Know Your Sin.

The first rule of FC is *know your sin*. If you don’t know your opponent, how will you beat him? We must become well-acquainted with the areas in our lives where the flesh gets the best of us, where you are prone to sin. Consider the circumstances that surround your sin, when you find the flesh making shots on you. For example:

- Do you find yourself tempted to *vanity* or *self-pity* when lingering in front of the mirror?
- Does sexual *lust* or *despair* creep in on late, lonely nights watching TV?
- Are you prone to *pride* when you succeed or receiving a compliment?
- Are you easily angered in traffic?

In order to beat the flesh, we have to know the flesh. We have to know how, when, and where it *hits*. This means we need to think about the circumstances in which we are tempted to sin—rejection, compliment, late nights, the mirror. Consider the circumstances of your sin and know the flesh. Ask the Spirit to convict you of those sins that need to be fought, to help you know your sin. A second, equally important way for us to *know our sin* is to know why we gravitate to certain sins. *Ask yourself why you are inclined to these sins? What do you believe they will do for you? Provide acceptance, satisfaction, self-worth, significance?* As Tim Keller says, get to the sin beneath the sin. Know the lie you believe when you give into the flesh. *Knowing our sin is the first rule in Fight Club.*

2. Fight Your Sin.

The second rule of FC is “Fight your sin.” Once we know our sin, we know *where* to strike. The challenge then is to actually strike, to beat up our flesh. Many of us have been lulled into thinking that sin is really no big deal, that Jesus paid for it at the cross and therefore we are home free. But this is not the message of the Bible. The proof of your faith is that it *fights*. And the flesh doesn’t give up easily. John Owen reminds us of the relentless foe we face when he writes: “*Be killing sin lest it be killing you.*” We mustn’t let our guard down. It’s dangerous to not fight. Here’s what it means to fight your sin: **it is a habitual weakening of the flesh through constant fighting and contending in the Spirit for sweet victory over sin.** Now, here’s what Fight Club isn’t. It’s not about morbid introspection and ascetic legalism. It’s not a religious, legalistic way to impress God or get on his good side. It’s a fight for true joy, lasting happiness, for life. Romans 8:13: “*For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if **by the Spirit** you put to death the deeds of the body, **you will live.***” Though fleshly living leads to spiritual death, Fight Club is ultimately about life, not death, about joy not sorrow, about the gospel not good works. *Fighting Your Flesh is the second rule in Fight Club.*

3. Trust Your Savior.

The third rule of FC is “Trust Your Savior.” So how do we fight? We fight, not in our own strength but with the muscle of the Spirit. Romans 8:13: *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if **by the Spirit** you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”* We are to fight in a particular way—*by the Spirit*. What does it mean to fight by the Spirit? Well, the

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context of Romans 8 makes clear that the Spirit is the opposite of the flesh. The Spirit inclines your heart to believe, not the promises of the flesh, but the promises of God. Not the promise of vanity to feel important, self-pity to rectify poor self-image, sexual lust for satisfaction, or anger to get justice. The Spirit wants to empower us to believe better promises, promises that are true and lasting. So instead of trusting fleeting, fleshly promises put your faith in the promises of God.

Ask the Spirit to strengthen your faith to believe God over the flesh. Look for counter promises in God’s Word. For example:

- Instead of sexual lust, choose purity of heart: *“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God!* God is eternally satisfying; lust is fleeting.
- Instead of vanity, consider the beauty of God: *“what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”* We will see, reflect, and rejoice in the beauty of God in Christ unveiled!

Romans 8:13 is also a promise: If we *“put to death the deeds of the body,”* we are promised *life*. This is eternal life, life that is vibrant and soul-satisfying, both now and forever (Rom 8:10-11). Those who trust in the resurrected Christ for spiritual and eternal life will receive immortal bodies in which they may enjoy God and his renewed creation forever. No more flesh, sin, suffering, no more fight club! The greatest weapon against our opponents is Spirit-empowered faith in the promises of God, promises that have been guaranteed by the death of Christ. Don’t trust the promises of the flesh; trust in the promises of your Savior.

How does a Fight Club Work?

Fight Clubs are small, simple, biblical, reproducible, and missional. No more than 2-3 people to a group. If the group grows beyond three, it is important that the newest member only participate a couple of times to get the idea and then start a new group. This retains the intimacy and trust built in the initial group, while also fostering reproduction—more fight clubs! Fight clubs are simple and biblical in their content, following a progression of *Text-Theology-Life*.

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Text-Theology-Life

- **Text:** The FC focuses on a common biblical text. Each person in the FC commits to devotionally read the same chapter from a book of the Bible each week. For example, your group could read through Colossians in four weeks. As you read, make a point of asking the Holy Spirit to draw your attention to whatever he wants you to know. The Spirit may be prompting you repent of a sin, rejoice in a promise, meditate on an insight, etc. Each week when you get together, make the text your initial focus.
- **Theology:** Work through the verses in community, trying to follow the flow of the author. From there, try to understand the central theological message of the chapter. Be sure you ask the question: “How does the person and work of Jesus inform this text?” Strive to be Christ-centered, not application-centered. Jesus is sufficient for our failures and strong for our successes.

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- **Life:** This is followed by bringing in your personal struggles and successes from your devotional reading. Be sure to allow plenty of time for this. Share your lives; promote godly accountability, and faithful prayer. Finally, be sure to share the names of people whom you are trying to bless with the gospel. Pray as a group asking God to help you trust his promises, as well as asking him to give unbelievers the same gift of faith.

Fight Clubs are simple, biblical, and missional, following the pattern of Text-Theology-Life. They avoid legalism by promoting a Christ-centered reading of the Scriptures. They avoid license by taking seriously the fight of faith against the flesh. Best of all, they promote lasting joy in Jesus.