

Ephesians Chapter 5 - John Karmelich

1. The subject of this lesson is on the topics of submission and sin. That may not be the happiest of topics, but it is a necessary one if we are to live a life pleasing to God. To please God involves both the idea of submission to Him and the desire to turn from sin. If we are willing to make that commitment, the good news is we will have a good life no matter the length of that life. Let me quickly go over key points about what that term "submission and sin" means, and then I'll lead that back to how that affects our daily lives as believers in Jesus.
 - a) First of all, we can't sin enough to lose our salvation. Salvation is strictly based on our trust that Jesus is both in charge of our lives (that is what submission is) and the fact that we believe Jesus is God. With that said, we as Christians still have to worry about sin.
 - b) The idea of a being a Christian is not what we have to do, but what we want to do. If we do care about submitting to God's will, then sin is something He wants us to avoid.
 - c) The idea is not that sin hurts God, but that it hurts us. God knows what is best for our lives. The idea of living a life pleasing to God includes the concept that He wants us to have joy in our lives. The more sin we can avoid, the better off our lives will be.
 - d) In my devotional time, I am currently reading the book of Leviticus. When I read that book I am reminded of just how much God hates sin. I also remember just how much trouble God has gone through in order for us Christians to deal with sin.
 - i) My point is God's attitude about sin has not changed through the millenniums. Sin is still something to be avoided and this lesson gives many examples of how we are to modify our behavior based on God's desire for how He desires us to live.
 - ii) The related point is that if we are grateful of how Jesus has died for our sins, then we should show that gratitude by living a life that is pleasing to God.
2. All of this talk about Christianity and sin leads me to my main point about this lesson: It is that the secret to living the Christian life has nothing (absolutely nothing) with trying hard or even trying harder to please God. It is strictly about letting God work through us to change us.
 - a) I guarantee if we start thinking that we really have a problem with this sin in a specific area of our lives, and we will end up focusing on that specific area of our life, and somehow, we will stumble in that area since we are focusing on it.
 - b) The secret to living the Christian life is not by trying harder, but it is all about letting God be in charge of every aspect of our lives. When it comes to the issue of sin, it is not about saying, "Dear God, help me to avoid this area of sin in my life." Instead it is about saying, "Dear God, I confess (i.e., submit) this part of my life is not pleasing to You. If it is Your desire for me to change, then You change me Your way and on Your timing."
 - i) That doesn't mean we willfully go back to doing some sort of sinful activity. It means that we trust in God to change that desire His way and on His timing.
3. At this point, it probably helps to actually talk about Chapter 5 of the book of Ephesians, which is the topic of this lesson.
 - a) This chapter is full of examples of how God desires us to live. The more I read it, the more convicted I feel about areas of my life that I know are not pleasing to Him.
 - b) What I desire for all Christians is to live a life full of joy and trust that God will not only provide for us, but also help us with whatever parts of our lives are displeasing to Him.
 - c) There are moments when I am nervous about my future. I don't know how God will get me through the next day, or week or year. I just know that in effect it is not up to me, but up to Him to take care of my needs. My most important responsibility in effect is to trust in God and remember that He is in charge of my life and not me. That is how one has joy as a believer. It is to remember that if God is in charge of our lives He will guide us as He desires as we go through life making the best decisions we can for that moment.

4. With this confusing introduction almost completed, ☺ I need to end this discussion by giving my title of this lesson: It is simply "How Christians are to deal with the topic of sin". The answer to that question is about submitting every aspect of our lives to Him to be in charge of those areas.
 - a) We are to confess to God any aspects of our lives that are not pleasing to Him. We are to trust that He is guiding us and is working on our lives His way and on His timing.
 - b) Our job, in effect is to do what He tells us to do and live how He desires us to live.
 - c) With that stated, let us see in this lesson just how God desires us to live. Not so we can try harder to live "this way", but so we can ask Him to change us, as He desires us to live.
5. Chapter 5, Verse 1: Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
 - a) I have to admit, the first phrase of this chapter scares me. It says, "be imitators of God".
 - i) Stop and think about that phrase for a moment. The God of the universe, who created everything and by definition is perfect, asks us to be like Him. That seems like an impossible request to ask us to be imitators of God.
 - ii) The secret of that phrase is not to be "God-like" as to have all the power that God has, but it is to live a life that is fully dependant upon Him.
 - iii) Now stop and think how much Jesus loved people. He cared enough about all people that He was willing to die on our behalf. In effect, that is what God is asking of us to do in this verse. It is not the idea that we have to be killed in the same manner as Jesus. What God desires of us, to have that same sort of loving attitude (total commitment) for Him that He has for us.
 - b) OK, that last statement is going to require more explanation. How exactly do we give our lives to Him, if that is God's desire for our lives? The idea is that as Jesus lived His life making a difference for others and finally dying to show how much He loved us. Therefore, God asks us in effect to "die" for His sake and the sake of others.
 - i) As a husband and a father, I would gladly give up my life for the sake of my wife and my children and not think twice about that. However, the harder issue is not to die for a great cause, but to live for the cause daily. To be a martyr for Jesus was and is the requirement of a lot of people, but that in effect requires less effort over the long run than having to live for Jesus daily. That daily living is in focus here.
 - c) This gets us to the issue of love. The reason Jesus died for us is due to His love for us. God in effect says that He has so much love for us that He does not want us to keep that love to ourselves but to share it with others. The idea of caring about others is not about trying hard to please others, but about letting God's love work through us to help others.
 - i) Verse 1 says that in order to be like God we have to love others. So what does that mean on a practical basis? It is about the idea of putting the needs of others as a priority over our own needs. It is about letting go of ourselves in terms of worrying how we should live our lives and saying to God in effect, You are in charge and I'm letting You deal with whatever I have to deal with today.
 - ii) To do that is in effect to ask God, "You be in charge of this and that area of my life as I live to make a difference for You. I let go of my desire to try to fix this or that area of my life. You are in charge of my life, and that's it." With that idea stated, the idea is then to go forward, make the best decisions possible and trust in the idea that God is guiding us because we have asked Him to do so.
 - d) Let me briefly talk a little about the phrase "fragrant offering" in Verse 1. This has nothing to do with how we smell. It is not about wearing a perfume that is pleasing to God. ☺
 - i) In my introduction I mentioned the book of Leviticus. In that book, there are different types of offerings that the Israelites could make to God. Leviticus states in effect that those offerings smell nice to God at least 18 times. The point is that when we act in a loving way to others, it in effect "smells nice to God". It is a simply a word picture of God approving of how we trust in Him with our lives.

6. Verse 3: But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.
- a) We now begin, what I call the tough section of Ephesians. This verse says that not only should we be "good" for God, but there should not even be a hint of any wrong doing in our lives. This is not about being perfect, but about avoiding what is sinful in our lives.
 - b) Before I discuss the points of this verse, I want to discuss what I call the strange chapter in Leviticus (Chapter 11). Most of the book of Leviticus is a guide on how God desires to be worshipped. It lists different types of sacrifices and the significance behind each of those sacrifices. For us Christians, Jesus fulfilled all of those sacrifices by his death.
 - i) My point here is not about all of those sacrifices. My point is about Leviticus 11, which discusses how Jewish people are to eat. It lists a bunch of different animals, fish and bugs and says in effect, "You (Israelites) can eat this and that kind of animal, fish and bug, but not these specific one's Chapter 11 lists."
 - ii) So besides the symbolic significance of those specific creatures, why would God want the Israelites (not us) to not eat certain things? I'll give you a clue: it was not to deprive them of trying those foods or doing it for health reasons. A point is God wanted the Israelites to act differently from everyone else around them. If God calls us (The Christian church) to live to make a difference for Him, then He desires us to act differently from how the world around us lives.
 - iii) We are not to act differently so we can say we are better people than nonbelievers. It is not to show others how religious we are. We are to act differently because it is the best way for us to live and also because it shows others by our lifestyle that we live differently for God out of love for Him and love for others.
 - c) Now that I have lectured all of us on the importance of living differently, let me now focus on the particular examples given here in Ephesians. Verse 3 mentions that we should not have any sexual immorality, impurity (referring to committing any type of sexual act outside of the bond of marriage including any form of pornography) and greed.
 - i) A question here: Why would greed be combined with two other words that both speak about sexually bad conduct? The idea here is that any of these things draw us away from what God desires for our lives. Most of us Christians are painfully aware that any and all of these concepts can be appealing or else we would not be drawn to them in the first place. Most of us also know that there are consequences of going down any of those paths in life, which is why Paul is warning us not to even go down those paths in the first place.
 - ii) It's time to come back to the common mistake all of us Christians make when we are dealing with any of these issues. We don't avoid bad things by trying harder. We avoid these bad aspects by giving them to God and saying it is Your (God's) problem to change me and help me turn from these areas. If we struggle in any of these areas of our lives, we should find another believer to pray for us and with us in those areas and ask those people for us to be accountable to them.
 - iii) This gets back to the idea of how God wants us to live. If we are to live differently for God, others might say to us, "Well you are no fun to be with". I would argue that living for Jesus brings more joy and even more fun than going after any thing that the world has to offer as an alternative.
 - d) I could probably give a full lecture on the dangers of sexual immortality, impurity and greed, but I am assuming that you who read this study already have a pretty good idea of what God desires from us in this area. If we struggle in one of these areas, first know that it is a common problem. Don't try to tackle any of these issues all by yourself. Ask others to pray for you and not to give yourself strength to overcome it, but pray for God to work in your life and my life so that through His power, we can overcome temptations that are hard for us to face on our own.

7. Verse 4: Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.
- a) If Verse 3 was tough, Verse 4 should scare us twice as much. ☺ The idea here is that the words coming out of our mouth should also be pleasing to God.
 - b) Think of Verse 4 this way: Verse 3 focuses on the eyes and about avoiding the temptation of what we see (be it sexual temptation or greed) and turning from sin based on what we see. Verse 4 focuses on the mouth. In other words we have to be careful of what we take into our body (Verse 3) and be careful of what comes out of our body (Verse 4).
 - c) OK John, we know you like to write bad jokes in these lessons. Are you saying it is wrong to have a sense of humor? No I am not. The point is about things coming out of our mouth that are unpleasing to God. That includes dirty jokes, foolish talk or coarse joking. It is the idea of jokes or foolish pranks that are hurtful to others we share those jokes with.
 - i) One thing I state on my web site is I take God very seriously and everybody else is "fair game". What I mean by that is I consider God to be perfect and therefore, one does not make jokes that take away from what God is capable of doing. However, the rest of us are imperfect people, and therefore, I'm pretty positive God does not have a problem with us having a sense of humor about our own lives.
 - ii) So given that, what is inappropriate behavior? Think of it this way: When we hear a dirty joke, that joke is often stuck in our minds for the rest of our lives. We may learn and forget many bible verses over our lifetimes, but for some reason those dirty jokes stick in our minds and don't go away.
 - d) All of this comes back to the idea that God wants us to be a good witness for Him. In order for us to be a good witness, He asks us to live differently and that means to watch what comes out of mouth as well as watch what we take into us in the first place. To sum up Verses 3 and 4 is to live a life pleasing to God means we are careful to watch what we "take in" (Verse 3) and what we "give out" (Verse 4) of ourselves.
 - e) So what do I do when I mess up in any one of these areas of my life? The answer is the good part: God knows we are imperfect people, which is why He tells us to confess sin as wrong and then ask Him to change us from that particular behavior. Once we do that (no matter how often we have to do it), we can have peace with God knowing that He has forgiven us of that particular action if we are willing to turn from it and trust God to help us avoid that bad activity and change our lifestyle to one that is pleasing to Him.
 - f) Remember that as imperfect people, being a Christian is not about saying or thinking we are better than someone else, but simply believing that God can and does work through people in order to make us into the type of person He wants us to be. OK, enough of the goodness of God, it is time to get back to our sins.
8. Verse 5: For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷Therefore do not be partners with them.
- a) Well, if you are not convicted enough by Verses 3 and 4, I guarantee you that Verse 5 will do the trick. What Verse 5 is saying is that anybody who lives the lifestyle as described in Verses 3 and 4 are not believers and has no part in God's kingdom.
 - b) So does this mean that if I have ever done any of those bad things in these verses, I am not saved? Of course not. To be saved means to be completely forgiven of all sins we have committed, past, present and future. These verses are talking about the type of person who has never made that confession in the first place, and who has never made any effort in their life to actually turn to God.
 - c) To put it another way: To confess Jesus as God is a good thing. I am more impressed with the type of person who does something with that confession. That "something" is to be willing to change our lifestyle based on what these last few verses are talking about.

- d) If we are not willing to change our lifestyle based on our trust that Jesus is God, what good is our belief in God in the first place? Again, the mistake we make is to think that all I have to do is try harder and I know I can live a life pleasing to God. The Christian life is never about trying harder. It is always and completely about letting go in the sense that we trust God to work through us to change us into the type of person He wants us to be.
- i) So does that mean I can keep on sinning until God is ready to change me? Of course not. If we care about God, than we should not want to do any of the bad things mentioned in the last few verses. To be a Christian means that we desire to live a life pleasing to God to begin with. Therefore, it should be our desire to turn from things that are displeasing to God and letting Him work through us to change us to be the type of person God wants us to be.
- e) The verses also tell us to avoid partnerships with people who don't care about serving God in their life. The verse says to avoid partnerships, (be it marriage or say a business partnership) with such people. What if say, we became a Christian after we got married and our spouse doesn't care about this lifestyle? The bible teaches us in such situations to stay in the marriage as to be a witness to our spouse. (See 1st Corinthians 7:12.)
- i) The important idea is about not letting the unbeliever's lifestyle be an influence over our lifestyle. Since most of us have to live or work with nonbelievers, we should still pray for them and work with them as necessary. At the same time, avoid the type of behavior that is displeasing to God.
- ii) The basic idea is that if we are Christians, we are to live differently not to show how much better we are than other people, but only to live the way God desires us to live in the first place. We should not be influenced as much as possible by the way nonbelievers live around us.
- iii) If people can't look at us Christians and sense that something is different about our lifestyle, than we are not living the type of life that God desires us to live.
- f) Final point: These verses also mention God's wrath for nonbelievers. This is another reminder that hell awaits all people who refuse to turn to Jesus with their lives. Therefore, if one wants a reminder of the danger of being influenced by the lifestyle of nonbelievers, that point about the reality of hell alone should scare us enough to stick to what God calls us to do.
9. Verse 8: For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.
- a) In these verses, Paul says we were once in darkness but are now in the light of God. What does he mean by that? It refers to the time in our life before we were saved, or if we were saved as children, it refers to a time before we understood what it meant to be saved. The idea comes back to the concept that because we belong to God, it should be our desire as Christians to live differently. That is what the word light is referring to. If we have God living inside of us, that presence should be like a light to guide our lives.
- i) Think of a lighted candle or lamp. If everything else around us is dark, that light becomes a guide to us as to where to walk. That light is what guides us so that we don't stumble in a dark place. That is why "light" is a great word picture for what God does through our lives. It is God Himself who guides us in how we should live and how we should make a difference for Him in our lives. He is our light.
- b) OK John, I get the word picture that light represents God being inside of us. What does that mean practically? Again, it means acting differently from the nonbelievers around us. It means turning from things that cause us to stumble in our relationship with God. It means to watch what comes in and what comes out of our lives because those sinful things are not pleasing to God.

- c) Speaking of humor, one of my favorite Christian jokes comes from a wonderful radio teacher (Walter Martin) who past away some years past. He used to say, "I know that a lot of you are wonderful secret agents for Jesus Christ. You're neighbors don't suspect in the least that you have committed your lives to serving Him." ☺
- i) The idea behind that statement is that if we have committed our lives to serving Jesus, it should be obvious to everyone around us including our neighbors. If we don't act any differently around our neighbors or anyone else, how will people know that we have committed our lives to serving Jesus?
- d) This leads me to Verse 9 that says we should seek all goodness, righteousness and truth.
- i) So what does that mean and why should I care? The idea is not what we consider good, right or true, but what God considers good, right and true. It is the principals as taught in our bible that teaches us what is good, right and true.
- ii) So are you saying John that I have to memorize my bible? No, but I am saying we need to seek God daily in terms of what He desires for our lives, and He alone shall lead us down the path of what He desires for our lives.
- iii) In other words, we should not let other people convict us in any aspect of our lives as right and wrong. God is more than capable of convicting us all by Himself and He is more than capable of leading us down the path He desires for our lives without the help of other people.
- a) John, are you saying I don't need to go to church or don't need to go to bible studies? Of course not. God often works through other people to get messages to us. The point is that it is neither I nor any other person that does the convicting, but God alone working on our hearts.
- b) At the same time it is God guiding us toward how He wants us to live, which is the idea behind His "goodness, righteousness and truth".
- iv) Speaking of conviction, it is time to get back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. ☺
10. Verse 11: Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.
- a) Ok what is "fruitless deeds" and how do I expose them? Think of how we do things that make a difference in other's lives. Even the most straightforward concepts like raising children or taking care of elderly parents would count as fruitful (not fruitless) deeds.
- i) The essential idea is to not waste time in our lives. Yes there are times we need to relax and "recharge our batteries". That is not the point. The point is about using our time wisely and using it in some capacity to make a difference for God.
- b) I want to spend a few moments discussing them term "exposing them". God does not call us to expose the deeds of evil people. When the text says expose them, it is referring to our own sins. We can ask others to help us deal with how we have been hurt. Know that when we grieve, we are only hurting ourselves and not others. You can't fix a person that doesn't want to be fixed. You can help a person that wants to be helped, but that is a separate issue from what is being discussed here. My point here is that God does not call on us to be the sin police, but just to think about our own lives and as much as possible to avoid activities that in effect do not produce "good fruit" in our lives.
11. Verse 12: For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible.
- a) Notice that Paul says it is shameful to say out loud what those who are disobedient to God do in secret. Paul and I are both stating that the idea here is about focusing on our own lives in the sense that God wants our lives to be "fruitful" for Him.
- b) This leads me to another quick discussion about the word light. The idea is thinking of Jesus as a light inside of us. The way we examine our own lives is to look at them in the light of scripture and our prayer life.
- i) I have found that if God wants me to change a certain aspect of my life, He makes that very obvious to me and He is the one who leads me to change my life.

12. Verse 14 (cont.): This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
- a) This verse appears to be a paraphrase of Isaiah Chapter 60, Verses 1 and 2. OK, now that we know where this verse comes from what does it mean? It appears to be an appeal to the nonbeliever or even the Christian that has never examined their own sins.
 - i) If we are making an effort to living a life differently from the nonbeliever, people may ask, "How do you do that?" Or, "How do you not get angry at that situation?" or "How do you have that sense of joy despite all you are going through"? Joy through all of lives problems is contagious and others will wonder how they too can have that joy. That is why this verse appeals to the nonbeliever who may see Christians living their lives differently and wondering how do I get to do that?
 - b) Suppose we have never had anyone ask us how we are different, or we have never led anyone else to Christ. The first thing we need to examine (myself included) is: are we living a life that is different from the world around us? I don't believe we generally have to announce we are Christians to nonbelievers. If we spend time with someone, it should just be obvious by the way we are living. Paul's main point through this section is about also examining our lives and seeing if we are living a life of trusting God for every aspect and asking God to change the areas of our lives that He does not approve of.
 - i) Paul's is saying that we need to, every now and then and ask God if there are areas of our lives that need to be exposed to the light of His truth.
13. Verse 15: Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.
- a) If Paul wants us to make wise decisions. It is important for us to understand the difference between knowledge, intelligence and wisdom. Here is my illustration of this difference: Suppose that we are hungry and there is food right in front of us:
 - i) Knowledge is about comprehending that eating food will satisfy our hunger.
 - ii) Intelligence measures how fast we know that eating the food will satisfy us.
 - iii) Wisdom is the process of actually eating that food.
 - iv) Intelligence tests only measure how fast we can grasp a concept. Wisdom cannot be easily measured in a standardized test, but is best understood by watching people's lives and seeing how they act in a given situation.
 - b) This leads me to explain what the bible means by wisdom: A wise person is the one who actually takes the time to learn biblical concepts and actually applies them to their lives.
 - i) The idea of having wisdom is not that we are smarter than nonbelievers.
 - c) With that speech out of my system, the point of Verse 15 is Paul is calling on us to be wise. It means to take the time to learn and actually apply what God wants us to learn, which is in effect the way He wants us to live our lives.
 - d) The final phrase of the verse that says the "days are evil". The point is not that some days in our lives are more evil than another. The point is we live in a world filled with people who live without God guiding them. The influence of sin in the world leads (among other things) to evil thoughts and deeds. The best and in effect the only way to live is to live a life for God in that we live to make a difference for Him in our lives. Need examples? Those start in Verse 18.
14. Verse 17: Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.
- a) Before we get to Verse 18, Paul gives us another reminder that our purpose of living starts with the act of discerning God's will for our lives. Notice this verse teaches us that we as Christians are able to discern God's will for our lives. We do that by learning from studying our bible, other Christians and sometimes just by watching God guide us.
 - b) To be a fool is not about being a slow learner. The biblical idea of a fool is about those who refuse to want to apply God's concept of how to properly live one's life.

15. Verse 18: Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.
- a) We now come to one of many controversial verses in the bible. Many Christians take the view that a believer should never drink alcohol at all. Other Christians hold the view that it is ok to drink alcohol but not to get drunk, as that is specifically what the bible teaches.
 - b) I am also positive that Jesus actually drank wine on occasions. That is because the annual Jewish Passover meal requires having a few drinks of wine. The Passover meal (the event where Jesus gives the "Last Supper") occurs in the spring and grapes only ripen in the late summer or early fall. Therefore, Jesus could not have drunk fresh grape juice at that feast.
 - i) My general view on Christians drinking is that it should be at a minimum and only in private settings and never to a point where one is slurring their speech.
 - c) The real point of this verse is that if we are filled with the Holy Spirit, that "filling" is a far greater intoxicant than anything we can get from alcohol or any other source.
 - i) Non-Christians look at believers desire to minimize alcohol and other stimulants and truly don't understand how we can be so joyful when we are sober. That is because the concept of being filled with the Holy Spirit is "foreign" to them.
 - ii) Among my conversations with my religious Jewish clients, I have discovered that they can relate to almost every topic I bring up as a Christian believer. The only exception is they don't get the concept of being filled with the Spirit of God. I say that as I have had some of them ask me why I don't drink alcohol very much.
 - d) OK John, how does one become filled with the Spirit of God? That is the topic of Verse 19.
16. Verse 19: Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- a) In all my years as a Christian, I can't remember ever once having another believer walk up to me singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Maybe I don't hang out enough with those in the music ministry. ☺
 - i) Some bible commentators talk about how it was common in the early church for believers to constantly sing such songs in greetings. That may or may not be true, but I do believe that misses the point of this verse.
 - ii) The key to understanding this verse is to read it in context of the previous verse. The previous verse says we should be filled with the Spirit of God instead of being filled with some sort of intoxicant such as the effects of alcohol.
 - b) Let me try this another way: Have you ever noticed that singing songs to God makes you feel a closeness to Him that lasts for a little while? That is what being filled with the Holy Spirit is all about. That is why most church services include a significant amount of time singing songs of praise to God. That particular act of singing can fill us with His Spirit and it reminds us that His Spirit is within us.
 - i) The idea here is getting us to focus on God and one significant way we do focus on Him is by singing praises to Him.
 - c) I admit a fault of mine is I don't listen to as much Christian music as I should. I spend a lot of time in my car driving and I usually listen to lectures, interviews and talk radio. I also admit I feel convicted from reading this verse that God wants to bless my life more if I spend more time listening to Christian music. The point is God will bless us if we choose to make the time to sing such praises to Him.
 - i) Spending time singing praises to God gets our focus upon Him. That is what the bible means by "stirring up" the Spirit of God within us. It is not a requirement as much as it is a choice of wanting to be blessed by God at any given moment.
 - d) This leads to Verse 20. The simple point here is that the lyrics of such music should in effect give praises to God for every aspect of our lives. I know the psalms alone do that and I suspect the "sum total" of all Christian music gives thanks to God for everything.

17. Verse 21: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- a) Verse 21 now begins a new section of the letter that continues into Chapter 6. We are about to discuss relationships between husband and wives, children and parents and between bosses and employees (or slaves and slave owners). The subject of marital relationships is the topic of the rest of Chapter 5 and the other relationships are discussed in Chapter 6. Since I brought up submission in my introduction, let me define it further:
 - b) Remember that the word "submission" is part of my title for this lesson. That word is given here in Verse 21 and is the key to understanding the next set of verses.
 - i) The word "submission" is best explained by breaking that word into two pieces. Take the word "sub" (as in submarine) and "mission" as in an assignment we are called to do. The idea is that we should volunteer to do God's will for our lives by being of help to others. Again think of "subs" being below the water surface in that when we are in service to others, we agree to be below (work for) them.
 - ii) God does not ask us to submit to other people because it affects our salvation. God asks us to submit to Him and to each other simply because that is the best way for all of us to live. The idea is to about to willfully choose to give up our desires of the moment in order to please the desires of someone else.
 - c) It would be helpful at this point to explain the concept of God the Father and God the Son in terms of submission. God the Father is not a superior entity to God the Son. If both entities are separate, then someone has to be the leader of the two. That is one reason why we regularly read of Jesus being in submission to God The Father's will. It was not that Jesus was inferior to God the Father. It is just that if there are two entities, someone has to be the leader of the two and God the Father is the leader over God the Son.
 - i) I mention that point here, as that is the focus of the relationship with marriages and also in the next chapter when we discuss other types of relationships.
 - ii) The bible never teaches that women are inferior as creatures to men. Submission has nothing to do with who is superior as a person. The idea of submission is about having respect for the concept that somebody has to be the leader, and God made the decision that men are to be the leader in a marriage and in the church.
 - iii) Do I believe a woman can run for political office? Of course. Submission is not about how society operates, but about how God desires us to show submission to Him by respecting His order of creation. This is God the Father being the leader over God the Son and about men in marriage being the leader over the wife. Not because men are greater, but just because it is God's choice for leadership.
18. Verse 22: Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
- a) Let me start by discussing the topic of Christian books and seminars on marriage. Most of the advice in such settings is good advice, but it can apply to a non-Christian marriage as well as to the Christian marriage. Two married atheists can have a better marriage if they are both nice and helpful to each other. I don't have a problem with books or seminars that give such advice. My point is simply that most of such advice is not "Christian only".
 - b) What is unique about the Christian concept of marriage is the idea of the order of things: That is, from God the Father, through God the Son through the husband and then through the wife. It has nothing to do with one spouse being superior to the other.
 - c) I can't resist telling a story about when a man on a television show that asked a lesbian, "When you slow dance with your partner, who leads? Do you decide ahead of time?" That in effect is the question God answers for us when He decides that men should be the leader. It is not about one gender being superior, but about the fact someone has to lead.
 - d) Let me also state the obvious here. If a husband asks a wife to say, murder cheat or lie, I don't believe it is God's will for wives to be obedient in such situations.

- e) Most married people know it is difficult (as in it does not come naturally) to submit in marriage. Some women will say, "Yes I will submit if my husband submits to God first, or I will only submit if my husband becomes a better person first". What we all have to remember is that we can't fix other people. All we can do is work on our own lives.
 - i) Looking back over my marriage, I have prayed too many times to ask God to fix or correct certain aspects of my wife's personality. Then it occurred to me fairly recently that my wife is God's problem and not mine. I recently started to pray to ask God to fix me and bless my wife. My job is not to give God directions on how to change someone. God is more than capable of doing that all by Himself.
 - ii) If someone hurt me, it is ok to tell God and even tell that person how we are hurt by that situation. Then we should remind ourselves that God is more than capable of changing that person and it is not our responsibility to fix others.
 - iii) We can't make our marriage better by trying to get our spouses to change. All we can do is submit to God by submitting to His desires for our lives.
 - f) So with all that said, what does submission really mean for the wives? It is to accept one's husband's decisions in your marital relationships. It is not about trying to overrule one's husband's decision. If you as a wife think the husband's decision is wrong on some issue that is God's problem to deal with. A wife should not try to sabotage her husband's decisions. If the decision turns out to be a bad idea, let God show him that and resist the temptation to rub it in. God is more than capable of making men see their mistakes.
 - g) If you women think I've been too tough on you here, what until you read what I have to say to us husbands in the next set of verses. ☺
19. Verse 25: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.
- a) Ok men, how much did Jesus love the church? Enough that he was willing to die for us.
 - b) So how willing are we men willing to not only die, but to live for our wives and whoever else we need to take care? We men too often think our wives know how hard we work to support them and they should be aware of how much we care about them and want to protect them. The mistake we men make is we don't make the effort to express that love and show that appreciation to our wives.
 - i) I'm not just talking about buying flowers or taking our wives on dates. That is a good thing, but that is not the point of this verse. The point here is that God wants us men to put our wives' desires as a priority over our own desires.
 - ii) Just to show me what God meant here, I was literally interrupted by my wife as I was writing this last sentence, to do something for her. That interruption is a good example. God asked me to put aside what I want to do in order to make my wife a priority. That is the concept of submission that God is looking for in a marriage.
 - c) Verse 26 talks about men "washing their wives" through the word of God. This has nothing to do with bathing. ☺ Yes it means sharing scripture with our wives, but the concept is actually much bigger than that. The point comes back to how we men should cherish our wives. God wants us as men to love our wives as much as He loves us.
 - i) We need to show our wives (not just say it, but show it) that they mean more to us than our own desires and wishes.
 - ii) One of my biggest faults as a husband is not showing my wife enough how much I care for her personally. I don't make much of an effort to show how she is special to me. Like most men, I am aware of my faults, but don't do enough about it.
 - iii) This is an issue where I have given up trying to fix myself and instead have asked God to change me into being the type of husband my wife desires. It is God's job to change us just as it should be our desire as men to be willing to be changed.

- d) Verses 26 and 27 talks about the role of husbands in preparing our wives for their eternal relationship with Jesus.
 - i) Before I talk about what this verse means, I should quickly talk about what these verses are not saying: They are not saying all Christians have to be married. It is just saying here what is God's desire of the husband in marriage.
 - a) Also know that Jesus stated there is no marriage between people in heaven. (See Matthew 22:30.) Our marriages do not continue into the next life. There is only one marriage in heaven, where the entire Christian church in effect marries Jesus. I'll save the topic of marriage to Jesus for another day.
 - ii) These verses make it seem like it is the job of a husband to fix a wife. We don't make our wives better people by telling them to do "this or that". We make them better Christians by being good husbands and letting God Himself take care of how He wants our wives to live.
 - iii) We as husbands don't have to tell our wives that we don't like the way she does a particular act. If she does something that is hurtful to us, we may share with her how that was hurtful, but it not our job as husbands to fix our wives. God is more than capable of doing that.
 - a) Even if our spouses are nonbelievers, if we focus our lives on being pleasing to God, our wives will pick up on that. If we are doing what God desires us as men to do, then we should just naturally want to treat our wives well and treat them as a special gift that God has given to us.
 - iv) This gets back to the concept that it is the job of all Christians to build up the body of Christ. That concept is all about Christians serving each other in that we give of ourselves so that another believer will become a better believer. That concept is to be used in marriage as well. It is about the husband taking the lead in trying to please his wife and putting her desires as a priority over our own.
20. Verse 28: In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- ³⁰ for we are members of his body.
- a) Think about how we men treat our own physical bodies. If we are sick, we do things to help our body heal and get better. For the most part, men don't try to hurt their own physical bodies on purpose as we want to live another day.
 - b) The point here is that God desires husbands to love their wives as much as they love their own bodies. The easy part is to think that way. The hard part is to actually show our wives through our actions how much we care for them and want to protect them. Wives need to see their husbands treat them as someone special.
 - i) The fact that I fail at times to do that is a fault in my own marriage that I need God to work on in my own relationship.
 - c) Let me try this concept another way: If God cares for all people and in particular He cares for the people He will spend eternity with, then it is God's desire that we too, care for those who we will spend eternity with. That idea of caring begins in our own homes. It is about the idea of leading our spouses to be the type of person God wants them to be. We don't do that by trying to fix them, but by being good examples to them of how God desires all of us to live. Again, the easy part is to say these things, the hard part for all of us is to actually live that way.
 - d) One of the reasons God designed marriage is because it is hard for most men and women to easily please one another through marriage. It does not surprise me when people in homosexual relationships claim that they truly love their partner. I am convinced it is easier to get along with someone who is of the same sex than the opposite one. The fact that most marriages requires a lot of hard work is part of God's design in order to make us better people. Which surprisingly, does lead me to Verse 31.

21. Verse 31: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.
- a) This command for marriage between a man and a woman is one of the first commands given in the bible. (See Genesis 2:24.) Marriage is about letting go of our relationships with our parents in order to put our spouse first in our lives. It is not about having to hate our parents but about making our spouses our top priority over our parents.
 - b) I admit that I struggle with becoming "one flesh" with my wife and I suspect like most married men, it is a hard thing for me to do. The idea is to focus on being "one" with my spouse in every aspect of our relationship. This is something I ask God to help me with.
 - i) In other words it is asking God to change me to be the type of person He wants me to be in my marriage and at the same time, asking God to bless my wife and letting Him deal with her relationship with me.
 - ii) I can't "fix" me, but God can. I can't change my wife, but God can. Knowing that bit of information is the key to making any marriage work. Too many marriages go bad because we try to fix our spouses instead of letting God be in charge of the marriage in the first place. Our job is simply to love our spouses the way they are, show that love to them and not try to fix them. Further, we must forgive them of their mistakes just as we ask God to forgive us of our own mistakes.
22. Verse 32: This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.
- a) Just when you think you understand a concept, Paul throws a "curve ball" at us. Paul is saying in this verse that a good marriage is like "Christ and the church". What Paul meant by that is simply that we should love our spouses as much as Jesus loves believers. Just as Jesus was willing to die for the church, so we should be willing to die for our spouses. The hard part to me is not to die, but to live for our spouse daily. That is the great challenge to make marriages work, and that is why it is difficult to have a good marriage without God being in the center of that marriage.
23. Verse 33: However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
- a) Remember the focus of these verses is on the man in a martial relationship. Paul's final point is that men must love their wives (the men who are married) as much as they love themselves. Yes that is difficult in practice, but that's the idea. Just as God demands that we regularly turn over our will to His desire for our lives, so God asks that us married men submit to the desires of wives in marriage. What I mean by that is if our wives desire something in our marriage it is our job (as much as possible) to fulfill that desire. It is about making the effort to be a good husband, not because we "feel it" but because that is what God call us to do in a marriage.
24. Let me end by coming back to the title of my lesson. I stated that this lesson is on the issue of submission and sin. The main idea is that God wants us to submit every aspect of our lives to Him. Submission also applies in other relationships of our lives, including that of marriage.
- a) The point is the way we deal with our sins is to let God be in charge of the problem areas of our lives. It is up to God to fix our faults and not us. As to everyone else around us, He is more than capable of taking care of them, so it is not our job to fix people.
 - b) God wants us to live differently from the nonbeliever. The secret to that act of living differently is not about trying harder, but about letting God be in charge of every (as in "every") aspect of our lives. That is the only way we can overcome sinful habits in our lives. The rest, as they say, is just the details.
25. On that happy note time to end in prayer: Dear God, help me to be the type of person you desire me to be. Help me to remember that I can't fix other people. Help me to learn the things You want me to learn in my relationships with other people. Help me to live my life to make a difference for You. Change me the way You want to change me, and bless my spouse and continue to guide them the way You want them to go in life. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.