

Are You Spiritual? (Ephesians 5:18-25)

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Many years ago a man called me on the telephone and asked me, "Do you got it?" I replied, "Got what?" The man continued, "You know, do you got it?" I once again asked him, "Got what?" Finally, he said, "You know, do you got the Spirit, do you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire and speak in the tongues of angels at your church." My reply to him was rather simple. I told him that spirituality is not determined by these things but by the daily filling and fruit of the Spirit operating in our lives. This particular man didn't want to hear about the fruit of the Spirit. He was only interested in counterfeit experiences and measured his spirituality on the basis of subjective feelings and mystical encounters not taught in the Bible.

Are you a spiritual person? A New-Ager might say, "Yes, I'm spiritual, since I have become one with the universe." The term spirituality is thrown around today and for many it means that a person has some kind of contact with their inner self, they follow mystical experiences, practice yoga, holistic health, mystical experiences, or they are connected with some kind of religion, even a cult.

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science said:
"Christian Science meets a yearning of the human race for spirituality."

I beg to differ! Spirituality for many people today is simply some kind of journey into whatever they believe or practice. Anyone, from Oprah Winfrey to witchdoctors, claims to be spiritual. What is true spirituality and how does a Christian who is truly born-again practice spirituality? What makes a Christian spiritual in his living? You might answer, "Well, I go to church. I try and live right. I don't smoke, chew, or go with the girls that do!" What is a spiritual person like? What are the marks of spirituality and how can we determine if we are a spiritual Christian? This is what we are going to tackle in this particular study. The Bible helps us to discern whether or not we are a spiritual Christian. The passage in Ephesians 5:18-25 clearly outlines what true spirituality is and how we can determine if we are a spiritual Christian.

There are two ways to discover if you are spiritual.

1. Understand the meaning of spirituality (Eph. 5:18).

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

The Biblical meaning and understanding of spirituality is that a person is controlled by the Holy Spirit so they can live a life that is pleasing to God. When a person is spiritual they are guided, controlled, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We must remember that the word spiritual contains the word spirit. This reminds us that the Holy Spirit becomes the key person within the Godhead that promotes and maintains spirituality in our lives (1 Cor. 2:15 – “he that is spiritual”). The Holy Spirit works in connection with our own human spirit, the place where God’s new life and nature resides, to promote godly and Spirit-directed living. Without the Holy Spirit dynamically and dramatically affecting our lives, we could not be spiritual. We could not live a life that is pleasing and honoring to God.

A spiritual person is dominated and controlled by the Holy Spirit and therefore lives differently. This means that a person cannot be spiritual unless they have the Holy Spirit indwelling them (Rom. 8:9). The unsaved person, who does not have God’s Spirit indwelling them, cannot be spiritual (“sensual, having not the Spirit” – Jude 1:19). People might talk about spirituality but they can’t understand it (1 Cor. 2:14), live it, or cultivate true spirituality in their lives, since they do not possess the person of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make them spiritual.

The Greek word used for “filled” has the implication and meaning that we are permeated, full, or overflowing with the Spirit’s presence, so that He alone controls and dominates our daily living. The word connotes being under the control, influence, and power of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, or permeated with the Holy Spirit’s presence, we are brought under His guidance, control, direction, and power for daily living and conduct. The filling of the Spirit does not mean I get more of the Holy Spirit; it means the Holy Spirit gets more of me!

The well-known British Bible teacher, J. N. Darby said:
"The Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian. But it is another thing to be so filled with Him that He becomes the source of each thought and deed so that what the heart produces is the fruit of His presence."

The Bible teaches that when a person is saved, he receives the permanent indwelling presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:22; 1 Thess. 4:8). However, we must tap into His presence and depend upon His daily power for our everyday living. We must allow the Holy Spirit to get more of us! We must be filled up today and overflowing with the Spirit's power, if we are ever going to live godly in this vile and wicked world. God wants us to live an overflowing life of fruitfulness as we experience the dynamic of the Spirit's power operating in our lives.

"Filled to overflowing,
Hearts aglow and showing Christ
To those who do not know Him;
Sanctified and holy, Yielded to Him only,
Vessel for the Master's use."

We live in a dirty, rotten, and filthy world today. Therefore, we need the Spirit's filling or controlling ministry, so we might experience victory, and manifest true spirituality and godliness in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15).

Here are some interesting Biblical facts:

- We are never told to be baptized by the Spirit.
- We are never told to be indwelt by the Spirit.
- We are never told to be gifted by the Spirit.
- We are never told to be sealed with the Spirit.
- We are never told to seek the Holy Spirit.
- We are never told to ask for the Holy Spirit.

Why doesn't the Bible command us to do these things? It's because every born-again, blood-washed believer already possesses the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual blessings related to the Spirit, the very moment he believes (Rom. 8:9). Many Christians today confuse the

baptism of the Holy Spirit with the filling of the Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit joins me to the living body and organism called the Church. *The baptism of the Spirit means I belong to Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:13). The filling of the Spirit means my body belongs to God (1 Cor. 6:19).* The filling of the Spirit means I am under the control of the Spirit's power and presence. The baptism of the Holy Spirit saves me but the filling of the Spirit *sanctifies* me. There is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5), but many fillings (Eph. 5:18).

The Holy Spirit's filling ministry is not permanent. It needs to be repeated many times throughout the Christian experience. A person can be filled with the Spirit one moment and grieve the Spirit the next moment (Eph. 4:30). When we quench the Spirit's ministry in our lives (1 Thess. 5:19), we need to confess our sin (1 John 1:9), claim our cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7), and seek a fresh filling.

Peter's experience illustrates how swiftly we can move from spirituality to carnality. Peter acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ in Matthew 16:17, but a few moments later he denied and rejected what the Lord revealed about His coming death. Matthew 16:22-23 records: "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

A person can be filled with the Spirit one moment and be filled with self or sin the next moment. Sin short-circuits the Spirit's filling ministry. Therefore, when we lose the infilling of the Spirit, we need the fresh filling. We need to be repeatedly filled with the Spirit since we sin and lose our fellowship with God. In other words, we need to be refilled and recharged with the Spirit's power for daily living. We need to once again be refreshed and revitalized with His personal presence and power, so we might live effectively for God in the midst of terrible times of wickedness and debauchery.

The command in Ephesians 5:18 actually reads, "keep being filled with the Spirit," or continually allow the Holy Spirit to overflow, dominate, and control your life. We need the overflowing presence

and power of the Spirit of God working in connection with our daily lives, if we are ever going to live a life that is honoring to God in relationship to our family, church, and society. Yesterdays filling will not meet today's needs. We need to keep being filled with the Spirit. Fill my cup Lord!

A negative and positive command is given to help us understand about true spirituality.

a. The negative – “be not drunk with wine”

Negatively, a Christian is not to come under the control and influence of alcohol “wherein is excess.” This is pointing to drunkenness, debauchery, lack of self control, or reckless abandonment. There are things in life that tend to drive people to drink. There are pressures and demands in life that cause people to feel the need for some stimulation, something that will undergird them a bit, and give them some confidence and added help or strength. The word for “excess” refers to escapism and the tendency to throw all restraints overboard and live without control. This is why people get drunk. They want to escape reality and have a temporary fix of their problems. However, the Christian is to satisfy the need for stimulation and strength by being filled with the Spirit, since this is God's provision for man's needs in life.

The Christian should never allow his body to be taken over by alcoholic consumption. Alcohol controls the vessel of the human body that is designed to be under God's control (1 Cor. 6:19). When something else controls our body, instead of the Holy Spirit of God, whether it's alcohol or some other sinful practice, we lose the filling of the Spirit, and defame the holy reputation of God, since He indwells our body. Christians who drink socially are playing Russian roulette with their lives and families. There is a Biblical case for total abstinence but this goes beyond the scope of our present study. Just because the Bible forbids drunkenness does not mean it condones drinking alcoholic beverages. Paul is simply using an analogy and is contrasting the actions of a drunken man with the actions of a Spirit-filled man.

Some people interpret this verse to mean that we should *compare* a drunken man to a person who is filled with the Spirit. In other words, people will act like a drunken man, if they are filled with the Spirit. They talk about becoming drunk in the Holy Ghost and base their experience on a verse like this. Of course, this verse is not talking about a Spirit-filled person acting like a drunken man, rolling around on the church floor, shaking, and barking like a dog. Paul is not comparing a drunken man with a person filled with the Spirit. He is actually *contrasting* a drunken person with a Spirit-filled individual. Although a Spirit-filled Christian is under a power outside himself, the point of Paul's analogy is contrasting the actions of a drunken man with a Spirit-filled man. A person who is filled with the Spirit acts different than a person who is filled with alcohol (Prov. 23:31-35). He lives a life that is holy and honoring to God.

b. The positive – “be filled with the Spirit”

This is the positive spin on what Paul is teaching. A man who is controlled by the Spirit will act differently than a drunken fool! There is an obvious contrast stated here. A drunken man is dominated and controlled by alcohol; however, a Spirit-filled man is dominated and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. For this reason, the two people act totally different. The man who is drunk talks, walks, and acts out of control while the man filled with the Spirit talks, walks, and acts in a controlled manner. In the case of drunkenness there is often moral debauchery (Gal. 5:21; 1 Pet. 4:3; Prov. 23:33). The Spirit's filling never produces this kind of lifestyle. In the case of drunkenness, there is loss of self-control; however, the fruit of the Spirit is “temperance” or self-control (Gal. 5:23). A believer who is filled with the Spirit is never transported outside himself where he can no longer control his actions (1 Cor. 14:32).

The Bible is teaching that when a person is filled with the Spirit he is transformed into another kind of person. It's the kind of person that is altogether different than the drunkard who lies in the gutter in a pool of his own regurgitation. The Spirit-filled Christian exhibits the loveliness of Christ and manifests godly traits. He is seen to experience life-changing traits – not the life-demoralizing qualities of a drunkard. The drunkard is altered to be shamed, while the Christian filled with the Spirit is altered to shine forth the likeness of Jesus Christ, by the Spirit's transforming residency (2 Cor. 3:18).

We must understand what genuine spirituality is all about if we are going to discover whether or not we are living and acting like a spiritual Christian. True spirituality is when a person, who is born again, and who already possesses the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:6), allows himself to be under the Spirit's filling or controlling ministry (Eph. 5:18), causing him to live victoriously and according to God's commands. The filling of the Spirit is explained elsewhere as being led by the Spirit and walking in the Spirit's presence and power (Gal. 5:16, 18, 25). The key for New Testament Christian living and victory is the Spirit's filling ministry.

George Duncan once went to visit some friends in the English countryside. For years they had lived in an old-fashioned, rundown building. To Mr. Duncan's surprise, he discovered that the house had been completely remodeled. The people had installed new lights, an electric stove, and many other pieces of modern equipment. But he was even more surprised to see the lady of the house still using a kerosene stove for cooking and oil lamps for lighting. After greeting him, she said, "George, don't look so confused. We've had a great change here, but we just haven't turned on the power yet."

Some of us, as Christians, need to turn on the power. We need to remember the new dynamic way of living we possess today, so we can be transformed into Christ's likeness.

Acts 1:8

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The Holy Spirit is our high-octane spiritual fuel. Have you stopped at the gas station lately? We don't need substitute fuels like alcohol, pop-psychology, and tranquilizers to enable us to live effectively. We need the real thing. We need the filling, control, and power of the Holy Spirit operating in our day-to-day living.

"Jesus, fill now with thy Spirit
Hearts that full surrender know,
That the streams of living water
From our inner man may flow."

John 7:37-38

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

Jesus was comparing the Holy Spirit to a well of life-giving, life-empowering, and life-sustaining water which resides on the inside of the believer (John 7:39).

Ray Stedman said:

“The filling of the Holy Spirit is the momentary taking from Him of the resources you need for the situation in which you are. It has nothing to do with an experience or a feeling or a crisis; it is a quiet drinking again and again of an inner supply of strength.”

The filling ministry of the Holy Spirit empowers us to live effectively, victoriously, mightily, and confidently in the midst of a devil-empowered, sex-crazed, and demonically-deceived society. A spiritual person is filled up, overflowing, or dynamically controlled by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God.

2. Understand the marks of spirituality (Eph. 5:19- 25).

When studying the Bible, we must learn to study it grammatically, if we are going to see how the verses connect together. When using proper methods of Bible study we can arrive at correct interpretations of Biblical texts. Grammatically, all that follows in Ephesians 5:19-25, connects back to the comment related to the filling of the Spirit in verse 18.

The following participles “speaking” (vs. 19), “making” (vs. 19) “giving” (vs. 20), and “submitting” (vs. 21) indicate that they are looking back to the Spirit-filled life. They are explaining what it means to be spiritual or filled with the Spirit. This means that what follows in verses 19-25 is actually the marks, fruits, or results that flow forth from the Spirit-filled life. These are the natural results which originate from the Spirit-controlled life. They are actually the true marks of spirituality. We can't be a spiritual person unless we know and reflect the marks of genuine spirituality in our daily lives.

Please notice that no tongues, slaying in the Spirit, dreams, and visions are present in this text when it speaks of spirituality. These experiences are never the true and lasting marks or signs of spirituality for New Testament saints.

There are five marks of spirituality.

a. Praise (Eph. 5:19a)

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

The first mark of spirituality, or living the Spirit-filled life, involves praise and worship to God. When we find ourselves joyfully praising God and worshipping Him, we can know that the Spirit is at work in our hearts and lives.

The Bible teaches that music and melody should be part of our Christian experience. The words “singing” (vocal praise) and “melody” (playing by means of a musical instrument) should be part of the Spirit-filled life and experience. Of course, the Bible is referring to only good and godly music, which reflects God’s holy nature (1 Pet. 1:14-15) and plan for Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-15). This is the only kind of singing, vocal praise, and instrumental music that should be part of the believer’s heart and experience. Much of what is called “contemporary” or “praise and worship” music today is fleshly and corrupt in its design, since it reflects the old way of life (2 Cor. 5:17; 6:14-17).

The Biblical word “psalms” points to the *inspired writings of the Old Testament* psalms that the Christians, as well as the Jews, used in their worship. They were normally sung with stringed instruments such as harps. The next word “hymns” refer to *non-inspired songs of praise* composed by Christians that ascribe worship and praise directly to God (Acts 16:25). Hymns fill our church hymnals today and have stood the test of time. The last expression “spiritual songs” is a general term that probably covers all kinds of vocal praise *centered upon spiritual themes*. The fact that they are called “spiritual” songs connotes that our vocal praise should originate from the Spirit’s filling ministry in our lives (Eph. 5:18) and express that God is in control of

our hearts and lives. Our singing should never originate from our carnal nature and base appetites (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Let's bring this up-to-date. The kind of music we listen to sends a very clear message regarding our own spirituality. What we listen to reflects who we are. If you listen to rock music, or Contemporary Christian Music, which reflects the culture and the devilish sound associated with the promotion of rebellion, sex, and drugs, then you can be sure that the Holy Spirit is not in it! You can surface many arguments for using CCM but they won't stand in the face of Scripture. Spiritual music is inspired by the filling of the Holy Spirit. It's a type of music that reflects the new nature (2 Pet. 1:4), new song (Ps. 40:3), and new life (2 Cor. 5:17) that Christians have in Christ - not the old way of life and rebellion.

If it sounds like the rebellious music of the devil, then it is! Let's stop fooling ourselves. If we think for one moment that an effeminate hippie is spiritual, who is swinging his hips on stage, who has tattoos plastered all over his body, and who is singing about God, with the sound of a rebellious rock beat, then we are deceived. We must beware of becoming carnal in our musical expressions of worship (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Colossians 3:16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Please notice that the same results of living the Spirit-filled life are also linked to living the Word-filled life ("psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"). This reminds us that being filled with the Spirit is similar to being filled with the Word of God. When the "word of Christ" finds a home and lodging place in your heart, or as the Scripture states, when you allow it to "dwell in you richly," then you can experience the filling, or control of the Holy Spirit.

A person who is filled with the Word of God will also be filled with the Spirit. Likewise, a person who is filled with the Spirit will also be filled with the Word of God. In other words, as a person submits to the authority of God's truth in their hearts, they will also come under the

control and authority of the Spirit of God. The Word of God and the Spirit of God work hand in hand (“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” - Eph. 6:17). Never forget that it is the Spirit of God and the Word of God which makes a person spiritual.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said:

“Nothing is more dangerous than to put a wedge between the Word and the Spirit, to emphasize either one at the expense of the other. It is the Spirit and the Word, the Spirit upon the Word, and the Spirit in us as we read the Word.”

The inner heart (“in your heart”) is where all true worship takes place (John 4:24). This means we can worship God without any external sound, the showy, or the spectacular. If we can’t worship without the externals, then we had better check up on our worship. It probably is centered upon our own carnality or fleshly experience instead of God. Some people worship their own style of worship instead of worshipping God.

A man once told me that he could not worship God without a certain sound, rhythm, or electrifying experience. This is certainly the sign of a person who has lost the wonder of true worship, which does not revolve around anything else, but God alone. True worship occurs in the heart. It’s from within that we learn to be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10).

Psalm 77:6

“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.”

b. Joy (Ephesians 5:19b)

Here is the second mark of spirituality. When the Bible says we are “making melody in our heart” it means that we have God’s joy ruling in our hearts. Joy is a specific result of the Spirit’s filling in our lives. When we are filled with depression, discouragement, and dismay, we can be sure that we are not being filled with the Spirit. This inward melody of Ephesians 5:19 refers to the bubbling joy that is on the inside of us, which means that no matter how bad things are on the outside, inside they are wonderful! A Spirit filled Christian is a joyful Christian.

Acts 13:52

“And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.”

Thank God for joy that comes from the inward heart. This is especially true for those of us who cannot hold an outward tune that is pleasing to the ear. We can still sing with melody in our hearts to the Lord.

Lehman Strauss once said:

“A lady once thought she had the gift of singing but nobody had the gift of listening to her.”

This inward melody of Ephesians 5:19 refers to the bubbling joy that is on the inside of us, which means that no matter how bad things are on the outside, inside they are wonderful! Do you have a song in your heart today? Do you have a melody of gladness filling your soul?

“I have a song that Jesus gave me,
It was sent from heaven above;
There never was a sweeter melody,
'Tis a melody of love.
In my heart there rings a melody,
There rings a melody with heaven's harmony;
In my heart there rings a melody;
There rings a melody of love!”

A Christian, of all people, should have a melody of gladness in his heart. When a person makes melody in his heart he is filled “with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8) and finds himself experiencing wondrous joy, as he sends praises up to God. The Spirit-filled life is to be a fountain bubbling over with joy as we worship God.

Inward melody, or the inner song of joy that is reflected in a person's praise, is a mark of the Spirit-filled life. The joy experienced in worship or praise reflects the Spirit's control over a person's life and becomes an indication that a person is filled with the Spirit. Also, the joy experienced in times of affliction (1 Thess. 1:6) is also a mark of the Spirit controlled life. Is your daily life filled with joyous praise or a melody of gladness? Do others see God's joy operating in your heart

and life? Some Christians sit, soak, and sour and claim to be spiritual when doing it! You be the judge whether or not they are spiritual.

c. Thanksgiving (Eph. 5:20)

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The third mark of spirituality, which is linked to the Spirit-filled life, involves thanksgiving. When the Spirit fills, reigns, and controls the life of the believer he will express gratitude to God. He will possess a deep sense of appreciation to God for the many blessings bestowed upon his life. He will count his blessings. This is not referring to occasional thanksgiving, but continual thanks given to God, as the Christian worships the Lord throughout his daily routine of life. If we would think more, we would thank more! Furthermore, it's not only being thankful for the pleasant things, but for “all things.” Anyone can be thankful for sunshine; however, it takes the power of the Spirit to cause the believer to be thankful for the storms of life, and help him to realize that “all things are for your sakes” (2 Cor. 4:15).

We might ask, “Surely God does not mean in everything?” However, the text clearly says we should give God thanks for every trial and test that comes our way (“all things”). The will of the Lord many times puts us in difficult situations and unpleasant circumstances, so we might become more like Christ, through the Spirit's filling ministry (2 Cor. 3:18). Therefore, don't complain about your circumstances; instead, give thanks. Giving thanks in times of difficulty will do something to you. It will make you into something that you never were before. It will change your life. You will become more spiritual in your outlook and personal living.

Someone wrote:

“Make it a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity comes to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing.”

When a Christian is thanking God for a trial that has come into his life, he can be sure that he is being filled or controlled by the Spirit.

"I thank You Lord, for the trials I feel inside,
That You're there to help lead
And guide me away from wrong.
And I thank You Lord,
For the patience those trials bring;
In that process of growing, I can learn to care."

Giving thanks for all things! What about life's injustices? What about sickness or the sudden death of a loved one? What about that person who rubs you the wrong way? The Spirit-filled Christian is ready and willing to give thanks in all things and at all times – in the best of times and the worst of times. Maybe we are not as spiritual as we thought!

One man recounts his time of service in the Navy. "I remember when I was in the Navy we all took our meals in the mess hall. (If you could see the food trays after the serving men had plopped the food on them you would know why they called it a mess hall.) I recall sitting with a Christian friend across the table from a great, burly quartermaster who was a complete pagan, with one of the foulest mouths I have ever heard; that is not uncommon in the Navy. As we always did, we bowed our heads and gave thanks for the food. It happened that my friend, who had just prayed with me, disliked the food and began to complain about it. Suddenly this fellow sitting across the table spoke up and said, "Look, didn't you just give thanks for that? Then eat it and shut up!"

This heathen man was right. We cannot give thanks and complain at the same time. God says, "in everything give thanks."

d. Submission (Ephesians 5:21-24)

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

The fourth mark of spirituality, which is linked to the Spirit-filled life, involves willing and loving submission. Paul now presents another important mark of spirituality. When a person is filled with the Spirit they will believe in Biblical authority and practice it within their personal marriage and appropriate church setting. Submission must therefore be evidenced and experienced in both the home (family life) and church (body life). Those who are filled with the Spirit won't try and buck God's system of authority, but by the Spirit's enablement and power, live by it, and find great blessing in their marriage and churches.

Paul, in this text of Scripture, moves into the realm of the family unit and demonstrates how the filling of the Spirit enables couples to live in harmony, and experience God's true blessing within their homes.

1. Mutual submission (vs. 21)

The filling of the Spirit is the key to resolving and maintaining marital relationships that honor God. When Paul speaks about "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God," in the context of the marriage relationship, he means that both partners must be aware of the needs of each other, and seek to serve one another by meeting their specific needs. Both the man and wife have mutual physical and emotional needs that must be met within the marriage relationship.

1 Corinthians 7:33-34

"But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."

Seeking to please one another in the marriage is important. Selfishness in the marriage relationship is never a sign of the Spirit-filled life. If we think we are spiritual, while refusing to reach out and meet the true needs of our partner, then we are only deceiving ourselves. True spirituality is evidenced in the marriage relationship when I am willing to bring comfort, fulfillment, and satisfaction to my marriage partner.

Many times in our marriages we revert to the old basis by which the world lives: "Well, at any cost, I'm going to have my rights. I demand my rights!" You will discover very quickly that this kind of worldly thinking and attitude will harm your marriage. The solutions people use to solve their marriage problems are often superficial instead of spiritual and Biblical. They do not get to the heart of the matter, which involves loving submission to one another in the marriage relationship, reaching out to one another's needs, caring for them, considering them, and going the extra-mile of the way.

Some of you men have got down Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," but you have conveniently bypassed the verse before it - "Submitting yourselves one to another." Men, God's Word teaches servant-leadership and this is the way it should be within the home. Every man must remember this. The man does not get his way in everything. The man's authority in the home does not mean he becomes a tyrant bullying his wife around saying, "Me Tarzan! You Jane!" There is a mutual submission that must take place in the marriage relationship that does not upset God's design for male headship and leadership.

A young sentry, on guard duty for the first time, had orders not to admit any car unless it had a special identification seal. The first unmarked car the sentry stopped contained a general. When the general told his driver to go right on through, the sentry politely asked, "I'm new at this, sir. Who do I shoot first, you or the driver?" The sentry had it right. Everybody submits. Submission is also for husbands as they seek to please their wives and meet their needs. No one escapes submission. Submission is bound in the heart of a servant leader.

At this point, I must share a word of caution. A man must be willing to submit to a woman's *need* in the marriage relationship; however, he is not required to submit to her *lead*. There is a difference. However, as men, we should seek to meet the needs of our wives, and we can do this without subverting our role as the male leader within the home. Something else needs to be said. Men, neither the pastor, church, or other friends are supposed to meet the needs of your wife. God has called you to reach out and meet your wife's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. If you live to merely satisfy yourself

within the marriage relationship, you will become empty and hollow on the inside, and your marriage will suffer greatly.

The point is this. There is always a mutual submission that takes place in the marriage relationship. Marriage is not a one-way street. A relationship never consists of one person. We must express concern for the needs and wishes of each other, so long as they do not upset God's design for male leadership and headship. Happy hearts and happy homes are found where there is loving sacrifice and submission in relationship to the needs of one another.

2. Marital submission (vv. 22-24)

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”

If two are riding a horse, only one person can be in the front. When it comes to marriage the man is to be riding in the front of the horse. There is much antagonism against this Biblical teaching today in our world. People accuse Paul of being a bigoted bachelor, a male chauvinist, or a woman-hater. The liberals claim that Paul's views reflect the social customs of his day but are no longer applicable today. Such statements are an attack on the inspiration and final authority of the Scriptures. These are not merely Paul's words; they are the very words of God. If you reject God's Word, you are moving toward difficulty, if not disaster, in your marriage relationship.

Leadership in the marriage relationship is not a 50/50 deal. The wife is to be subject to her husband “in everything” (vs. 24). God even expected this from Christian women who were married to unsaved men (1 Pet. 3:1-2). Their testimony of submission can be a way to win their unsaved husbands to Christ. The point is this. God clearly commands the woman to follow the leadership of the man within the marriage and home unit. God's plan for marriage has not changed. Likewise, in a day of feminine theology and sexist uprising, God's plan for marriage still works.

A spiritual woman who is filled or controlled by the Spirit will lovingly, graciously, and submissively surrender to the husband's leadership in the home. She is willing and ready to follow the man's decisions concerning the spiritual matters of home and church life. She is willing to support him as he seeks to direct the family unit, make decisions, and takes the lead. A Spirit-filled woman will not override the God-given authority of the man within the family unit.

When a woman allows a man to lead, she complements his Biblical manhood. Ladies, remember that your submission to your husband is to be done "as unto the Lord" (vs. 22) meaning that you are ultimately submitting to God's authority when submitting to your husband, since God gave this command. Also, you are also submitting to your husband in order to bring glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31).

John Philips remarked:

"This perspective lifts the command to a higher, holier and more heavenly plane.

We must once again remember that everything in these verses grammatically reverts back to verse 18. Therefore, the woman's submission to male leadership within the marriage is the direct result of the filling and control of the Holy Spirit taking place within her heart and life. Ladies, the only way you can live under your husband's authority, or rule, is by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The secret of the woman's ability to reverently and lovingly submit within the marriage relationship is the filling or reigning ministry of the Holy Spirit in her heart and life.

Someone wrote:

"Sadly, it can be said of many professing Christians that they are saints outside but devils at home!"

The home is where we spend a lot of time but many times we are not seen in our best colors. However, true spirituality is witnessed in the home when a wife lovingly submits to her husband's headship and leadership. How can we be the kind of people God wants us to be within the privacy of our four walls? The answer is the filling or control of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit takes us to the Word of God, shows us the truth (John 16:13), and then empowers us to live by it (Gal. 5:25).

The woman by design is to be the man's helper (Gen. 2:18) and not his rival. She is to be a willing and loyal helper to accomplish the man's aims and his goals. It is not to be the other way around. God never intended the man to fulfill his wife's aims or goals. She is to be his willing helper and partner in whatever he does for God and chooses to do in life. The woman is made essentially to be a follower. All of the Scripture confirms this to be true. It's within the role of following that the woman finds true fulfillment.

Ladies, have you been a spiritual follower and helper to your husband within the home? Have you been a helper or hindrance to your man? Have you been a quiet follower or vocal complainer? Be honest. The Bible links spirituality to submission to your husband. You can't be spiritual when you oppose your husband. If you are his rival, then you cannot be a spiritual wife. If you are not willing to follow his leadership and submit to God's Word and the authority of your husband, then you are not being a spiritual woman and wife. When your husband says, "Let's start going to church more, it will be good for the family;" do you become his rival, or willingly follow him? When your husband says, "We need to change some things in the home," do you seek to override his direction?

1 Peter 3:5

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands."

The true adornment and beauty of a woman is her spirituality, as she seeks to reverence her husband, and follow his leadership and decisions.

One older godly woman remarked:

"Before giving somebody an answer I am in the habit of saying to them, 'I'll have to check with my husband and see what he thinks.'"

This is sound advice. There is nothing more wonderful when a woman truly stands by her man, respects his headship, and supports his leadership. Submission is when a woman willingly yields her rights. It involves a voluntary attitude of respect and cooperation with her husband.

One woman wrote:

“Submission is being willing to renounce our own will and way for that of another. It is the opposite of striving, rebellion, self-assertion; and the loud, pushy, obnoxious, or boisterous opposition toward another. It involves deference and surrender, inner stillness, and peace.”

Some men are hounded, henpecked, and hogtied by a woman who is not filled with the Spirit. Ladies, when will you allow God to break through the walls that you have erected in your marriage, so He can make a difference in your personal life and marriage relationship? The woman, who wants to be spiritual, will seek to follow God’s pattern for submission, whereas the woman who wants her own selfish way, will continue on her self-made destructive path that leads to marital dysfunction and disharmony.

e. Loving (Ephesians 5:25)

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

The fifth mark of spirituality, or living the Spirit-filled life, involves loving. A man who is a Spirit-filled loving leader within the marriage relationship will express sacrificial love toward his wife, even as Christ expressed toward the Church, when dying on the cross. Christ is head of the Church (Eph. 5:23), and yet, He died for the Church. Let us never forget this loving sacrificial example.

“Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

When a man truly loves a woman he will sacrificially give himself for her. He will be a servant leader. He will reach out to her and seek to protect her, provide for her, and please her. He will love her to the end of his days.

“With this ring, I thee wed,
And pledge to thee my love.”

This kind of committed and undying love in the marriage relationship makes submission much easier for the wife. Loving sacrifice goes a long way. It can heal wounds and rekindle the needed spark in a

marriage relationship. Song of Solomon 8:7 says that “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” Spirit-filled love cannot be quenched.

President Theodore Roosevelt was a hopeless romantic. While attending Harvard University, he met Alice Hathaway. She was the woman of his dreams, she was the seventeen-year-old cousin of Teddy's best friend. If ever there was love at first sight, this relationship was it. On January 25, 1880, Teddy wrote in his diary: "A year ago last Thanksgiving I made a vow that win her I would if it were possible. And now that I have done so, the aim of my whole life shall be to make her happy and to shield her and guard her from every trial. And oh, how I will cherish my sweet queen! How she, so pure and sweet and beautiful, can think of marrying me, I cannot understand, but I praise God it is so."

This attitude reflects the loving sacrificial care a man is to have for his wife. This is the kind of love that the Holy Spirit can inspire and promote within the heart of every Christian man. Sacrificial love results from the work of the Spirit of God taking place in the heart of Christian men.

Let's conclude this study. Paul presents the marks of praise, thanksgiving, submission, and love as the direct result of the Spirit's filling ministry. These are the marks of all true spirituality. A spiritual person will find himself practicing these very things on a daily basis within his life and marriage. Do you find yourself praising God, thanking the Lord for everything, submitting, and loving in the marriage relationship? How you answer these questions will determine the level of your spirituality.

Are you ready to take a spiritual test? How often have you praised God this past week? How often have you given God thanks for the things He has done in your life, the lives of your children, and the blessings He has brought your way? When was the last time you thanked Him for the sickness and trial that has come into your life? Have you been willing to reach out to one another's needs in the marriage relationship?

Ladies, have you submitted to your husband's leadership and decisions this week? Are you willing to lovingly, quietly, and submissively follow Him? Men, are you loving your wife in a selfless and sacrificial way by reaching out to her, meeting her needs, telling her that you love her, and demonstrating your desire to please her?

How did you do on the spiritual test? Is there room for improvement? If so, make a commitment to God that you are going to allow the Spirit to control your heart and life, so you might regain the level of spirituality that God wants for your life. Our personal lives, marriages, and churches suffer when we are not spiritual. We need the Spirit's power operating in our lives today.

Lehman Strauss once said:

"The Holy Spirit is the greatest unused power in the world."

Dwight L. Moody had dedication and enthusiasm. Shortly after his conversion he wanted to teach Sunday school but was told he would have to form a class of his own. Praying for guidance, he went into the streets of Chicago, where he won the hearts of boys and girls, by giving them candy and showing them kindness. He also excited their imagination by promoting contests, and soon organized many groups of youngsters throughout the city. Ethel Barrett says, "He was like a huge, bearded Pied Piper, and the children just followed him into the Sunday schools and into the arms of God." When asked the secret of his success, Moody declared it was due to his submission to the Savior and the Holy Spirit's power.

Dearly beloved, we need the same attitude of submission to God (James 4:7) and the same reliance upon the Spirit's power (Acts 1:8) for our daily lives. The filling of the Spirit is the secret to living the Christian life (Eph. 5:18). Submission to God and reliance upon the Spirit's power will take us on a new and exciting journey, which will transform our personal lives and marriages, and promote newfound victory. The filling of the Holy Spirit will result in a life that is filled with praise, thanksgiving, submission, and love.

A man who drank heavily was converted to Christ and lived victoriously for several weeks. One day as he passed the open door of a tavern, the pungent odor drifting out aroused his old appetite for

liquor. Just then he saw this sign in the window of a nearby cafe: "All the buttermilk you can drink-25 cents!" Dashing inside, he ordered one glass, then another, and still another. After finishing the third, he walked past the saloon and was no longer tempted. He was so full of buttermilk that he had no room for that which would be injurious to him.

The lesson is clear. To be victorious over our evil desires, we must make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14), and this is ultimately accomplished by being filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled or controlled by the Spirit, we will no longer be overcome by the old, lustful appetites, which once ruled our lives. We will not be defeated by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Devil-wrecked lives, depression, defeated lives, divided families, and damaged marriages can be spiritually healed through the indwelling, empowering, and life-changing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

"Spirit of the Living God, Fall fresh on me,
Spirit of the Living God, Fall fresh on me.
Melt me, mould me, Fill me, use me.
Spirit of the Living God, Fall fresh on me."