

## Chapter 5

### WHO'S DRIVING YOUR CAR?



Imagine you are at a party. During this party you're going to be tempted to (a) get drunk, (b) take drugs, (c) engage in sexual activity, or (d) all of the above. What forces in your life will influence you to reject or engage in any of these activities. Will it be your friends, family, the people you want to impress, your own desires, or God? How much do these forces affect your life choices, therefor determining the direction of your life?

Life is a journey that requires us to choose what roads we will take. The roads we take will determine our quality of life. We are driven individuals, in other words, there are forces and influences that will determine what roads we choose. We really need to ask ourselves what are the driving forces behind our life? The answers will determine what road we are taking and the quality of live we will have. We need to ask ourselves how much of a driving force is Jesus in our lives?

In the previous chapter Romans 10:9,10 made it evident we need to admit Jesus is our Lord and that a Lord is much more than a teacher, mentor, or guide. A Lord has complete authority and control over its subjects. Acknowledging the need for Jesus to be "our Lord" seems like a simple thing to do but it's not.

Our self-centered nature is to think we have everything in control. This attitude is most prevalent when things are going well in our lives.

I believe Jesus was warning us about this when he said in Luke 6:24,25 “woe to you who are rich, for you already have received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep”. Is He saying it’s bad to be wealthy, well fed, and happy? No, He is not saying this because the bible is full of examples of wealthy individuals who loved God and had great joy in their lives, such as King David. He is saying “woe” because prosperity and good times keep us from looking to Him to be in control of our lives.

Conversely in Luke 6:20,21 Jesus is saying blessed are those who are poor, who hunger, and who weep. Why? Does He want us to be miserable? If this was the case then why did Jesus say He came to set us free (John 8:32), give us life to the full (John 10:10), to take away our burdens (Matthew 11:28-30), and to make our joy complete (John 16:24)? He is saying these people are blessed because through their hard times and misery they will look to Him for comfort and help. They will be saying - “we need you Jesus to be in control of our lives, because life is not so great right now”.

The intent of this chapter is simply to get you to think about what are the driving forces behind your life and to get you to think about how important God really is to you. What influences and drives you is a serious issue because I believe there are many who think they will go to heaven but they may be in for a major shock. For many Jesus is simply a fire insurance (hell insurance) policy. They think going to church a few times a year and hanging a cross somewhere in their home or on their person will cover their spiritual bases.

Then there are others who go to church every Sunday but their lives clearly show Jesus is not their Lord. The previous chapter lists scriptures that give us assurance of salvation but these scriptures make it clear we must “believe” in Him and this belief means more than just acknowledging his existence. The way many who claim to be Christians lead their lives makes me wonder if they really believe Jesus is who He says He is. You would think if we really believed it would make more of a difference in our lives. Jesus tells us in John 3:3 we must be born again in order to enter heaven. This scripture makes it clear there should be a change in our lives because of Jesus.

We need to ask ourselves if we really believe He loves us, hears and answers our prayers. Do we really believe Jesus wants to and is knows how to give us an abundant life. Do we really believe His truths will set us free and our lives will actually be better if we live out these truths? Our belief should impact our lives and if it doesn’t we have to ask ourselves what do we really believe? If we claim to believe and we reject living out the life Jesus tells us to live are we rejecting Jesus himself? Perhaps, if this is the case, we may be worse off then someone that never heard of Jesus because we have no excuse!

If we do claim to be a Christian is it more of a cultural identity than because of what we believe? Christianity can be a cultural identity when we grow up attending church just because we feel that is what we are supposed to do without making any real attempt to know God. For example, I saw a letter to the editor in our college newspaper where the writer claimed to be half Jew. Clearly this person viewed the Jewish faith as a cultural identity instead of a belief system since we can’t half believe something and I feel many Christians do the same.

If our faith is to mean anything we should have a desire (instead of a sense of obligation – a big difference) to know God and to do His will. If we don't God will not be the driving force behind our life even though we may think we are "spiritual". Maybe this is why Jesus gives us this stern warning that we would be foolish to ignore.

***Matthew 7:13,14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.***

Think of your life as a car and think about where Jesus is in this car. For many Jesus is nowhere to be found – not in the car or anywhere near it. For others He is in the back seat, only being called on if there is a problem. This describes the lives of many who claim to be Christians. I say "claim" because I believe this type of person's salvation may be at risk. For some He is in the front seat. He has much more importance but He still is not in control. He needs to be in the driver's seat because only He can take you down the road of contentment, peace, joy, and eternal life.

If He is in the front seat you will still have eternal life but the road you take will not give you the abundant life Jesus promises. This has been the story for much of my life and many others who attend church on a regular basis and who appear to be trying to live the "Christian life". The biggest disappointment I see with myself at times and with many others is when our lives are no different than anyone else. There is not the joy, contentment, and fulfilled life God wants us to have. Instead we complain too much, people know us more for what we are against instead of what we are for, and too often we don't really like ourselves due to guilt.

When we are constantly complaining, have no peace and joy, other people have no desire to be around us. Why would anyone we know want to have a relationship with Jesus if it appears a relationship hasn't done much for us? When we are unhappy with our own life it is tough to care about anyone else. This is not God's will. God wants us our lives to be different. He wants us to be a sign that points to him, an advertisement for God instead of one against him. He wants us to be a light for others.

***Matthew 5:14,16 - "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.***

In my own life, and I do not believe I am much different than anyone else, factors that have dimmed my light are; forming my identity on the wrong things, dwelling on my failures, failure to be obedient to God, pride, and not trusting God to run my life. Focusing on overcoming these issues has made the biggest difference in my life. The next five chapters talk about these problems and I deeply hope some of these truths will help you as much as they helped me.

If He is in the back seat you need to ask yourself some very serious questions. Is He really your Lord? Who influences your life more – Jesus, your friends, your peers? Are you making any attempt to know

who Jesus is and what His will is? Do you really believe in Him or just His existence? Remember James 2:19 said even demons believe He exists but they shudder. I do not want anyone to doubt their salvation yet I wonder how many have a false sense of security, especially when it appears doing the will of God is not a priority in their lives. Can Jesus be your savior but not your Lord, a question often debated among religious scholars? Why even take this chance, especially since his “Lordship” only leads to a more fulfilled life. You don’t get to heaven by obedience, because that would mean you have to “earn” your way in (can’t get there by works!), but if you truly “believe” your desire should be to do what God wants – your heart will effect your actions!

All of us will sin, all of us will want to be in control at times, all of us will not trust God all of the time and this is why God’s grace is important (see chapter 9), so it will be our heartfelt commitment to earnestly want to allow Jesus to be in control (our trust in him) that will be what makes the difference in how we grow and live our lives as well as our salvation. I know it is not easy to relinquish control of our life to someone else. I like to drive my car and I admit I do not feel comfortable when someone else is doing the driving. The difference is we are relinquishing control to someone who knows more than we what is the best road to take and how to get the most enjoyment out of our journey.

In order to put Jesus in the driver’s seat you need trust Him, know you need Him, and have a desire to know Him. If you have any doubts about where Jesus is in your life I would recommend you start making Him your Lord now. Pray and ask Jesus to be in control of your life. Don’t take any chances of not entering into heaven. Commit yourself to spiritual growth. If you make this commitment you will begin to have the “abundant” life God wants for you. You will begin to develop the contentment Paul talked about Philippians 4:12. You will begin to have peace on the inside no matter what is happening on the outside.