You are also required to post a minimum of 1 reply of at least 250 words to another classmate's thread. You must incorporate a minimum of 2–3 citations in each reply as well as integrate 1 biblical principle. Acceptable sources include any of the assigned textbooks, the Bible, outside texts, and articles from peer-reviewed journals

**TOPIC:** Select 1 of the following:

1. What do you believe is the single most influential force in today's society that sets the tone for an individual's personal values and why? Does this force affect Christians positively or negatively? What is your advice regarding this influential force?

**Individualism**

The single most influential aspect in society is cultural views of the individual, to put it into a question: as individuals should we place the needs of society over our individual needs? Or are we as individuals responsible for no one but our own path and therefore should make decisions based on our current circumstances? In Western democracies we have a very individualistic approach to our lives, we view our lives as distinct from others and therefore the actions we choose should be based off of what is best for us. “On the one hand, it always means relating to a more or less larger or smaller world in ways that can be practical or ideal, negative or affirmative, ruling or subservient, indifferent or passionate; but on the other hand, it also means that individuals comprise a world for themselves and are centered in themselves, as self-sufficient unitary beings” (Simmel, 2007). This view that we are independent beings, responsible only for ourselves and therefore should base all decisions off of what is best for us at the moment radiates from every facet of Western culture.

**Collectivism**

The opposite side of that coin is collectivism, a view largely held in Asian communities and nations, this view holds that individuals are simply members of a group and therefore has an inherent responsibility to their group to ensure that the group thrives even at the cost of individuals. This view causes people to lose track of who they are and therefore restricts any opportunity for the culture to adopt new views or stances. “Collectivism focuses on community and society and gives priority to group goals over individual goals. Essentially, the community decides what is right and beneficial for the people” (Kato, 2011). Collectivism leads people to ignore their own needs to a destructive end, this causes people to not think of themselves spiritually and ultimately can lead people to eternity without Christ.

**Effects on Christianity**

Unfortunately, either of these views can lead people down destructive paths, they are both human constructs born out of our own brokenness. Individualism breeds destruction through the selfishness and self-centered attitude of men, out of this we view the world through our own eyes, not thinking of our creator. However, when we stand before God and take account of our sins we will stand as individuals, so this provides the ability to think about our individual debt that we owe, and pursue the only method of redemption. Collectivism brings people to think about what others need before themselves, which is scriptural, however if the society is teaching these principles outside of Christ then they are as useless as any other virtue the world teaches. Collectivism, can lead people to never pursue God as an individual who needs a savior and thus can lead to destruction.

Psalm 34:19-22 “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.  He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems the life of his servants” (English Standard Version).

**Different Cultures**

A culture that is vastly different from my own is Japanese culture, which is very collective thinking, or at least appears to be. Coming from an individualistic culture, I am prone to think about my own personal walk with Christ and even get into a mindset that to walk with Christ I don’t need any other people around me. However, we know that God did create us for community Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (English Standard Version). However, the collective mindset when focused on Christ can be beneficial as long as it allows for the individuals to pursue God and does not allow the assumption of being saved seep in, rather than as people we have to continuously pursue God.

**References**

English Standard Version. (n.d.). *Holy Bible.*

Kato, M. (2011). Dichotomies of collectivism and individualism in bioethics: Selective abortion debates and issues of self-determination in Japan and ‘the West’. *Social Science & Medicine*,   507-514.

Simmel, G. (2007). Individualism. *Theory, Culture   & Society*, 66-71.