

## Three Primary Effects of the Spirit's Influence, Part 2

Ephesians 5:19-21

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Several years ago, I told you a story that I simply can't resist telling you again. The story is about an old farmer who lived out in the country but who, one particular weekend, had to be in the big city on business. So, he decided that while he was there, he would attend the big city church. And he did attend, and when he got home, his wife asked him, she said, "So, what was it like?" She said, he said, "Well, it was good overall," he said, "but there was one thing they did that was different. They sang praise choruses instead of hymns." So I said, "Praise choruses? What exactly are praise choruses?" He said, "Well, they're sort of like hymns, only they're different." She said, "Well, what's the difference?"

He said, "Well, it's kind of like this." He said, "Let's say that our cows got loose and were in the corn and I wanted to describe to you in a praise chorus what had happened, it would go something like this: 'Martha, Martha, Martha, O Martha, Martha, Martha, the cows, the big cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the white cows, the black and white cows, the cows, cows, cows are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, the corn, corn, corn.' And he said, 'And then if I were to repeat that two or three times, well that would be a praise chorus.'

But if on the other hand, I wanted to tell you that same story in more like a hymn, this is what I would say to you: "O Martha, dear Martha, here thou my cry. Incline thine ear to the words of my mouth. Turn thou thy whole wondrous ear by and by to the righteous, inimitable glorious truth. For the way of the animals, who can explain there in their heads is no shadow of sense, hearkenest they in God's sun or His rain unless from the mild, tempting corn they are fenced. Yea those cows in glad bovine, rebellious delight have broke free their shackles, their warm pens eschewed. Then, goaded by minions of darkness and night, they all my mild Chilliwack sweet corn have chewed. So, look to that bright shining day by and by, where all foul corruptions of earth are reborn, where no vicious animal makes my soul cry, and I no longer see those foul cows in the corn." The farmer said, "You know, that's a hymn. And then if I were to only sing verses 1, 3 and 4 and change keys before the last verse, that's a hymn."

Well, that's a pretty serious oversimplification of the different styles of music, but the farmer had learned this: that although there may be distinct styles of worship music, each with its own

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eccentricities, whether the country or the big city church, whether hymns or praise choruses, wherever they are, God's people will sing to their God. It's part of who we are. It's part of our spiritual DNA. It's an expression of the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives. That's really what Paul wanted the Ephesian church to understand. It's this very issue of music and the different styles of music that he addresses in Ephesians 5:19.

Now just to remind you again of the context, the theme of this long section that begins in 5:15 and runs through 6:9 is that if we're going to walk worthy of our calling, something he's commanded us to do, then we must walk in biblical wisdom. Verse 15, "be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise ..." Verses 15 to 18 explain how. There are several components of a life of biblical wisdom and the last one of those components, the one to which Paul was really driving and building, is in verse 18, "be filled with the Spirit." If you want to walk a life of biblical wisdom, then you must be filled with Christ's Spirit. We learned that being filled by the Spirit means that the Spirit fills us with the Word of God so that it permeates, directs, and controls our thoughts and our attitudes and our actions.

Now in verse 19, there's a turn in Paul's thinking. He leaves the command to pursue biblical wisdom and how to do that, being dominated under the influence of the Spirit by the word, and he begins to show us the consequences or results of walking in biblical wisdom under the influence of the Spirit. Just to remind you, chapter 5, verses 15 to 18, we have the command to walk in biblical wisdom. Chapter 5:19 all the way down through 6:9, we have the consequences of walking in biblical wisdom. Being filled by the Spirit with the Word of God produces consequences. It produces real change in our lives. Just as there are effects of being under the influence of alcohol, there are effects of being under the influence of the Spirit and those effects are equally clear.

Now Paul tells us what the primary effects of being under the Spirit's influence are in verses 19 to 21. There are three primary consequences of being under the influence of the Spirit. These are true in every life whether you're a wife, a husband, a parent or a child, a slave or a master. These things will be there if you're under the influence of the Spirit. Let me read it for you. Let's get a running start beginning at verse 18,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled by the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

That is one sentence in the Greek text. The main verb of the sentence is in verse 18, be filled, “be filled by the Spirit.” Verses 19 to 21, there are five participles that modify that main verb “to be filled.” Note them in verse 19: speaking, singing, making melody, in verse 20, giving thanks. And in verse 21, you’ll notice the marginal note. It’s translated in our New American as “and be subject.” Literally, it’s “being subject.” There’s the fifth participle. Now those five participles are explaining the primary results or consequences when a person is filled by the Spirit with the word. They’re always present when a person is allowing the Holy Spirit to fill them with the word.

Now there are five participles, but there are really only three primary consequences. First of all in verse 19, there is a love for God-centered music. In verse 20, there is a pattern of thankfulness. And in verse 21, there is a heart of submission to duly constituted authority, so a love for God-centered music, a pattern of thankfulness, and a heart of submission. Where the Spirit’s influence through the Word is truly present, these will be present.

Now understand that these are the inevitable results of being under the influence of the Spirit. You can’t help it. If you’re under the influence of the Spirit, controlled by the Word of God, these things will begin to demonstrate themselves in your life. But these things are also a kind of goal or pattern. They, they show us God’s expectations of all Christians. So, on the one hand, where the word is filling the heart with, by the Spirit’s work, these will be inevitable. At the same time, these three become goals that all of us should pursue.

It’s kind of like if you suspect that there’s a problem with your blood chemistry, your cholesterol is elevated, and you go to have your blood cholesterol checked. And you find out, you take the diagnostic test, the blood test, and you find that your cholesterol is high. That is an inevitable result of both your genetic makeup and probably your lifestyle, the foods you’re eating, lack of exercise, etc. That’s the diagnostic. But you don’t simply ignore that consequence; instead, you begin to make changes in your life to increase your good cholesterol and to decrease the bad. That’s how it is with these consequences here in Ephesians 5. On the one hand, they’re like the test results of being filled by the Spirit. If you’re filled by the Spirit, these markers will be in your spiritual bloodstream. On the other hand, these test results should encourage us to continue to make changes in our lives. So then, we need to look at these things on both sides. We need to

see them as a spiritual diagnostic, and, at the same time, we need to promote and encourage these things in our hearts as well.

Now the first primary result or consequence of being filled by the Spirit with the Word is a love for God-centered music, a love for God-centered music. We began to look at this last time, two weeks ago, because of the conference. Look at verse 19, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord ...” We have received an amazing gift, the gift of music. In fact, we are hard-wired for music. Isabelle Peretz of the University of Montreal was quoted in Newsweek as saying this, “The human brain seems to be specialized for music.”

Why is that? Well, the obvious explanation for this reality is because we are made in the image of God. The reason you hum, the reason you sing, the reason you carry your iPod everywhere you go is a reflection of the person of God. God, at this moment and throughout eternity, is constantly surrounded by music. And as we saw two weeks ago, God Himself sings. And so, it is an expression of who He is. Christians under the influence of the Word and the Spirit love music, especially music that focuses on God. They love to sing His praises. When the Spirit fills us with the Word, our souls just break out into song that celebrate our great God.

You know, it’s interesting. In every point in church history, when true revival has come, it has come through a recovery of the powerful preaching of the Word of God. And fresh on the heels of that recovery of the Word of God, in its wake, a fresh breeze of new God-honoring music has always swept across the church. Why is that? Because where there is an authentic work of the Spirit of God, there will always be music, because it’s who God is.

Now in Ephesians 5:19, you have in essence a kind of textbook on the role of music in the life of a Spirit-filled believer as well as a Spirit-filled church. It’s really an amazing verse. You’re going to be shocked at this, but it’s going to take me a couple of weeks to unpack it here because in His profound wisdom, the Spirit has packed into this brief verse five insights into the role of music in the life of a Christian, five profound insights. Look at verse 19 again, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord ...”

The first insight that we see in these words is the purpose of music in the Christian’s life, the purpose of music in the Christian’s life. And there are two purposes. First of all, there is a horizontal purpose. And frankly, this one’s surprising, but notice how verse 19 begins, “speaking

to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ...” Why does Paul say that our music, in our music, we are speaking to one another? What is that about? Why do we speak to one another in our music?

Well, keep your finger there, but turn over to the parallel passage in Colossians 3 because he fleshes this out a little more in this passage. Colossians 3:16. The verse begins with the counterpart to being filled by the Spirit which is, “Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you” [we studied that at length. And then the first consequence here, just as in Ephesians, is music. Notice what he says,] “with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Now notice here that he fleshes out the one comment. In Ephesians we’re told we’re to speak to one another, but we’re not told what that speaking is to accomplish; here we are. Two things, teaching and admonishing one another.

Now go back to Ephesians 5. Why do we speak to one another in our music? To teach – that is to instruct, to impart knowledge; and to admonish - that is to warn, to exhort, to urge. Teaching is imparting the truth. Admonishing is persuading someone to respond to that truth. Both of these take place or should take place in our music. There is a horizontal purpose to music. Maybe you’ve never thought about this before. Music is not solely addressed to God although as we’ll see in a moment it is. It is also to be instructional to the people of God. It’s for one another’s benefit as well. It’s about teaching, imparting knowledge and then challenging someone to live on the basis of that knowledge.

We did that just this morning as we sang “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” We reminded ourselves of who God is, and we called ourselves to trust Him for that reality. Regardless of whether trials come and whatever happens, we can hang on the faithfulness of God. We both instructed ourselves in the character of God, and we admonished ourselves to cling to that reality about who He is. So, singing is primarily about the mind. In fact, Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 14:15. When he’s talking about the worship of the early church there in Corinth, he says, “Understand that when you gather to worship, make sure you sing with your mind,” he says.

The main point is that God designed music. One of the purposes for which He designed music is to be a teaching tool. One of the chief purposes of music in the church is to teach one another spiritual truth and admonish one another to do it. How does that happen? Well, I mentioned this morning you can also go back to the Psalms and see this same thing happening.

Let me just give you one example. You don't need to turn there, but listen to the first few verses of Psalm 95 and notice how often the psalmist is not talking to God initially; instead, he's talking to his fellow worshipers, admonishing them. And then he begins to tell them about who God is. He instructs them, he teaches them. Listen. Psalm 95:1, "O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. Now here comes the instruction. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. And then he begins to unfold the majesty of God ..." There is instruction and admonition. There is teaching and admonition. We speak to one another in our music. Music is a tool for mutual edification. Speak to one another.

Now, this is really important for us to grasp. That means music is, first and foremost, a form of communication, not entertainment. It primarily serves a mental purpose, not an emotional purpose. Very practically, this means that we should choose and sing songs not primarily because we like the sound of the music or the style of the music, but because of the lyrics. We should not choose music because of the way it makes us feel. We should choose music because of the way it makes us think. In fact, can I put it this way? Our worship in music will only go as high as our true understanding and knowledge of God and His Word goes deep.

This means that the lyrics should be biblical. They should not be contrary to the Bible, that's pretty obvious, but in addition they should be permeated with biblical truth. That's why the Reformers and the Puritans used to talk about singing the Bible. They didn't mean you started, you know, in Philippians 1 and sort of kept singing through. They meant that the music of the church was to be informed by, filled with the language and truth of Scripture. We sing the Bible. This is what the psalmist says in Psalm 119:54 when he says, "Your statutes [God] are my songs ..."

Another implication of the fact that Christian music is to edify and teach and admonish others is that our first thought when it comes to the corporate singing should not be primarily about me. Your first thought when it comes to corporate singing should not be about you, the style of music I like, the songs I like. In corporate worship, our concern should be for others, the others around us. In fact, Paul says this explicitly in 1 Corinthians 14:26. He says, "... [Now] when you assemble [as a church, you sing,] each one has a psalm, [and he includes other things, including some of the problems there in Corinth." And he says, "Whatever's done when you gather like that, including the singing of psalms, do it [for edification,] for building up others."

Now, I realize this issue of music is a very personal issue and a very emotional one, but let me just say, and I know this is true, that if you're here this morning, and you personally prefer more traditional music, that's okay. But don't sit and sulk during the contemporary music. Instead, sing out so that those who do respond to contemporary music are taught and admonished with the truth that we sing together. It also means, if you're on the other side, that if you personally prefer contemporary music, you don't sort of check out and inwardly sit there and fume and complain when we're singing traditional music accompanied by an organ. Instead, you join in hoping and praying that those who love traditional music will be instructed in the truth of the lyrics, be persuaded to respond in obedience. Music in the corporate worship is not primarily about you; it's about God, as we'll see in a moment, and others. Music serves a horizontal purpose. We are to speak to one another, we are to admonish one another in our music.

Music also serves a second purpose, and that is a vertical purpose, not only a horizontal one, but a vertical purpose. Look at the second half of verse 19, "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord..." So, music is others-directed for their edification, and it's God-directed for worship. Music is intended to be for God as well as for each other. That means that when we sing, music expresses our hearts to God. It expresses our praise to God, doesn't it? Psalm 66:4 says, "All the earth will worship You, And will sing praises to You; They will sing praises to Your name." Music expresses our praise to God. It also expresses our thanksgiving to God. Colossians 3:16, "singing with thankfulness in our hearts to God." Psalm 33:2, "Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings."

Music even expresses our repentance to God. Psalm 51 is a song meant to be sung with the accompaniment of musical instruments, and it is a powerful expression of repentance. Music expresses our petitions to God, the things we'd like for God to respond to and do. The Psalms are filled with examples of that, but just listen to Psalm 5.

Give ear to my words, O Lord, Consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, For to You I pray. In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch. [And then he begins to pour out his petitions.]

So, music then, expresses our hearts to God. Whether it is praise or thanksgiving or repentance or petitions, it is vertically directed. In that sense, we sing to the Lord. Ultimately though, music, whether on the horizontal level or the vertical level, all ultimately, is for one great end, and that is (what?) to glorify God. God created music for the sole purpose of bringing Him glory. How do

I know that? Well, Romans 11:36, Paul says there in this sweeping statement, “For from Him [that is, God is the source of all things] “and through Him” [that is, God sustains all things] “and to Him” [that means God is the end of all things, the goal of all things] “... To Him be the glory forever and ever.” Ultimately, everything God created including music exists for one great eternal purpose: to bring Him glory. That’s why there is music. It’s not for our selfish use. It’s a tool to help us glorify God.

In Colossians 3, Paul explicitly says that we are to sing to God, meaning to the Father, but notice here in Ephesians 5:19, he says it a little differently. He says we “sing and make melody ... to the Lord.” Now every other time this expression “Lord,” the Greek word is “Kurios,” occurs in this letter, it refers to Jesus Christ. So, Paul is here demanding that our songs not only be sung to the Father, but also to Christ. If you were to look in the book of Revelation, you would see that the songs that are sung in heaven are addressed both to the Father and to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the distinctive of all truly Christian singing.

Can I tell you that it concerns me that we live in a culture where those who control Christian publishing are all too often trying to make as much money as they can to increase their market share, to support the bottom line, and they go to the lowest common denominator? They produce music that just about anybody can be comfortable singing if they believe there’s a God. Christian music is distinctively Christian. Pliny the Younger, writing in the year 112 A.D. in a famous letter to the Emperor Trajan, described Christians like this. They are those who “recited to one another in turns” [that’s kind of an antiphonal singing, kind of a choir, congregation-type thing] “a hymn to Christ as God.” The focus of our music is to be others and it’s to be God.

Christian, there’s nothing wrong with your listening to secular music as long as the lyrics of course are not contrary to the Scripture. I can tell you that if you were to look at my own iPod, you would find my music tastes are extremely eclectic, everything from classical to contemporary. In fact, occasionally my kids look at my iPod and look at me with their eyebrow raised, “That’s on your iPod, dad?” There are very few kinds of music I don’t enjoy if the lyrics are acceptable. But if your iPod or your CD collection is more about Mozart or the Black-Eyed Peas than Christ, there’s a problem, and the problem is deeper than your musical tastes. What it means is that you are not permeated with the Word of God. You are not filled by the Spirit with the Word. For the Spirit-filled Christian, music that glorifies God is a huge priority. It has to be because of its purpose, to benefit one another and to offer our hearts to God in praise, thanksgiving, and petition.

There's a second insight in this amazing verse about music, not only its purpose but secondly, the variety of music in the Christian's life, the variety of music in the Christian's life. Notice in verse 19 Paul identifies three types or kinds of lyrics that are acceptable in the worship of God, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Paul uses those same three categories in Colossians 3. Those were the most common words for religious songs that are used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint. They are often used even interchangeably in the psalm titles so, we shouldn't make any really hard, sharp distinctions between them, but there are some nuances of difference between them.

Let me just briefly give them to you; first of all, psalms. The Greek word you'll recognize, it's the word "psalmos." Our English word then is not a translation; it's a transliteration from Greek. The Greek word originally meant to pluck the string of a bow, or it referred to the sound that comes from a stringed instrument. So, when it's used in the Septuagint, this word makes it clear that when the people of God in the Old Testament sang the psalms, they did so with musical accompaniment, with string accompaniment.

In the New Testament, the word "psalmos" occurs seven times, five times clearly referring to the Old Testament psalms. The other two times are the ones we're looking at here in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. So then, putting it all together, we can say this, Psalms refers primarily to the Old Testament Psalter and to later songs that arise directly out of the poetry of the Psalms or that use the Psalms as a pattern. Now, when Paul says we ought to sing psalms, obviously, we ought to include the Psalms themselves in our worship music. And while we don't, as our Presbyterian brothers, have a Psalter, many of the songs we sing have their theological and even wording basis in the Psalms. And the truths taught in the Psalms should inform and serve as a basis for other songs that we sing. That's psalms.

The second type or style of music he mentions here, hymns. Again, English borrows the Greek word which is "hymnos." It literally refers to poetry recited or sung, most often in the praise of or the honor of a deity. Both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, hymns are songs that set forth some truth about God and are usually addressed directly to God. Allen Ross, in his excellent book on worship, writes, "A hymn was more formal, loftier and more universal in scope [that is, than a spiritual song,] focusing on one or more of the divine attributes and not on our personal experiences." So, a hymn is about God, celebrating something that's true about God, not so much something that's true about us or that He's done in us.

Many scholars agree that the New Testament contains several fragments of poems that may very well have been first century hymns. For example, Luke 1, Mary's "Magnificat." Also in Luke 1, the "Benedictus" of Zacharias. In Philippians 2, that amazing passage about our Lord's condescension and exaltation, Colossians 1, that description of Christ, and 1 Timothy 3:16. Those may all be fragments of first century hymns. And all of those focus on Christ and the atonement. Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn after the Last Supper, both Matthew and Mark tell us. The early church sang hymns, even corporately as well as privately.

One of my favorite illustrations is there in Acts 16 where Luke tells us that when Paul and Silas were in prison in the Philippian jail, at midnight they are singing praise to God. Literally, the Greek text says they are "hymning to God." Our music should be God-centered. That's really the message behind this word "hymn." Our message should, our, our music rather should be God-centered, Christ-centered, and cross-centered. As I said, there's a problem in the church if you can't tell by the music that they are followers of Jesus Christ and celebrate His death and resurrection.

The third expression is "spiritual songs." The Greek word for "songs" here is the word from which we get the English word "ode." It's a poem intended to be sung. It can be used of a dirge, but most often it's about songs of joy and praise. Or it might be used generically for any kind of singing, sometimes with musical accompaniment. Paul adds an important word here, the adjective "spiritual," a spiritual ode, to distinguish these that ought to be sung in the church from secular songs.

By the way, can I just stop here and say, the Bible knows nothing of God's people gathering for corporate worship and singing secular songs as is unfortunately happening in many professing evangelical churches today. Spiritual songs, now spiritual songs here refers to music that is neither psalms nor hymns, but has a biblically solid spiritual message. Again, Allen Ross, in his book on biblical worship, writes, "These are new songs that set forth the believer's spiritual enjoyment of life under God." These tend to be more about you and your experience and what God has done for us.

Now those three expressions then summarize the variety of music that ought to fill the Christian's mind and the church's hymn book. From our understanding of those three styles, I want us just briefly to set out some guiding principles for selecting the right music. As we understand that variety, here's what ought to be true of whatever variety we listen to.

Number one, the lyrics must be biblical. The lyrics of the songs we sing are to be full of rich biblical truth. Certainly, that was true of all the music recorded in Scripture, and our lyrics are to follow suit. Not only are they to be biblical, they ought to have something to be said that can't be said in three words or less. You know, there are many poorly written songs today. There are many weak, inane, ridiculous Christian songs that say absolutely nothing. And those of you who are a little older, before you glory too much, let me say that there are some identical songs to that in our hymn book as well, weak, inane, ridiculous. We ought to sing songs that say something. The lyrics of God-honoring music must have something to say, and what they have to say must be patently biblical.

Not only should our music be biblical, but our music should be balanced. Our music should mirror the balance of the inspired music in our Bibles. Take a look at the music in our Bibles. The Spirit-inspired psalms and hymns in Scripture set a pattern for balance in several ways. Our music should be balanced in terms of Old Testament revelation to New Testament revelation. We have the psalms which speak of God in a variety of ways, but mostly of Him as Creator and Sustainer, Protector, Savior in a physical sense and occasionally of spiritual salvation. When we come to the New Testament revelation, we find that the music has one consistent theme. What is it? Christ and Him crucified. That same balance should be true of our music as well, not always just about God as Creator, but about God as Redeemer and vice versa.

There should also be a balance between subjective experience and objective revelation. By subjective, I mean having to do with me and my feelings about God, my thoughts about God, what He's done for me. By objective, I mean the truth of who God is and what He has done, His character and His acts. It's okay for some of our songs to be subjective, the subjective expression of our thoughts and feelings to God. For example, I love the song we sing, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that You're my God." That's a very personal expression of my own heart and thoughts to God. We find that same kind of personal expression in the Psalms. But much of the music of Scripture rehearses God's objective revelation of Himself to us, and we must have that balance between subjective expression of our thoughts to God and the objective revelation of who God is as revealed to us.

For every song about me and my feelings, there should be a balance of songs that are solely about God like "Holy, Holy, Holy" and "O Worship the King." Some songs do both at the same time like a couple of favorites we sing, "In Christ Alone" and "Before the Throne of God Above." If a Christian or a church is always singing about their thoughts and their feelings and rarely singing about God Himself and about His Son and His atonement, they are seriously out of balance.

There's another way we ought to stay in balance and that is the songs recorded in Scripture teach us to have a balance of old songs and new ones as well. The psalms were composed over a period of about nine hundred years. Most of the psalms were written more than a thousand years before they were singing them in the New Testament churches. Then in the days of the early church, the Christological hymns were added. You know, we sing a mix of songs. Maybe you've thought that that's just a desire to try to keep everybody happy. You know, let's sing a little contemporary so they'll be happy. Let's sing a little traditional so they'll be happy. Absolutely not. It is based on the pattern of the early church.

When you came into a church in the first century in the New Testament times, you heard psalms sung that were written a thousand years before, and you sang Christological hymns that had just been written. That's why we have the mix we have, because that was the pattern of the early church. Let's not lose the legacy that we have. We have one hymn in our hymn book, "Be Thou My Vision," an ancient Irish hymn that was written thirteen hundred years ago. That's wonderful, and it expresses powerfully our thoughts of praise to God. And we sing contemporary songs that were written last year.

And that's how it was in the early church, and that's how the elders are fully agreed that it would be in this church as well. Understand that's philosophical, it's biblical. The Old Testament and New Testament people of God both sang old songs, that were part of their heritage, and they continued to add new songs in their day. In the same way, we should follow that example, and there should be a mix of old and new. That's the pattern of the New Testament church. So our music is to be Biblically based, it's to be balanced between Old and New Testament revelation, subjective and objective, between old songs that are part of our heritage and new songs that are written in our day.

You know, there can, and should be, a great variety in our music. That's Paul's point here. But regardless of what form it takes, wherever a person is filled by the Spirit with the Word, there will be a deep, abiding love for God-centered music. Let me just ask you to take a little spiritual diagnostic yourself this morning. Do you have, personally, a genuine love for God-centered, spiritual music that expresses the words of the Scripture back to God in praise? You say, "I'm not sure."

Well, check your iTunes account. Check the albums on your iPod. Take a look at your CD collection or your vinyl records, maybe. Pay attention for a day or two to what you hum and what you whistle or what you sing, what station you turn to most often on your radio. Think

about whether, when you come corporately with the people of God, ask yourself, “Do I really enjoy joining with the people of God and singing?” And by the way, if you do enjoy it, that doesn’t necessarily mean you pass the spiritual diagnostic because there are a lot of people who just like music, and so they can take it wherever, whatever it comes, however it comes. They’re more into the emotion of the music and the feel of the music and being swept along by the music.

So, don’t ask yourself just do I love music. Is your heart into the lyrics? Is your heart into offering those true words of praise back to God, or are you just driven along emotionally? If you don’t have a love for God-centered, Christ-centered, cross-centered music, then, according to Paul here, you are not under the influence of the Spirit and the Word. And if you find your own musical tastes are primarily secular, then realize that you are using one of God’s best gifts in a way He didn’t design.

Now, as we think about ways to encourage and promote a love for God-centered music, remember it’s both a spiritual diagnostic and an encouragement to make some changes. Let me suggest several practical helps. These are not inspired, but I’ve found these to be helpful. Maybe they’ll be helpful to you.

Just a couple of quick thoughts, number one, memorize the lyrics of the songs we sing as a church as well as other songs that are rich in biblical truth. Memorize them. Why? So that, you can sing them privately and find encouragement from them. Last night, you know, even as I was finishing up my preparation, I took a walk as I often like to do. I was just thinking and praying and meditating, and I love being outside in that context. And without thinking about what I was going to say today, my mind automatically went to one of the songs we sang this morning, and it reminded me of the greatness of God and who He is, that He’d be faithful as I opened the Word of God to you this morning, as I preached this week out at the Shepherds’ Conference. And so that’s what music does. Memorize it so that it can come to your mind, and feed your soul, and encourage you, and teach you, and admonish you.

Secondly, fill your life with God-centered music. Fill your life with God-centered music. Buy good CD’s. Download good music. Tell Seth your taste in music, and ask him if he can recommend a group or musician who produces solid lyrics in that style. For every secular song you put on your iPod, load several good Christian songs with solid lyrics. Turn off the news, turn off the political talk radio, off the sports talk, and fill your mind with biblically solid lyrics. Try to develop a taste for good lyrics outside of your own personal music style preferences.

Number three, try singing together as a family. Memorize one of the songs that we're singing here at church, and sing it together. I do that personally. You know, if we sing a new song, and I really like it, I'll go Monday or Tuesday and download those lyrics and put it on my phone and begin to sort of run those lyrics over my mind until I learn them so I can express that in praise to God, so that I can be instructed. Do that as a family. When we first started singing "In Christ Alone" here as a church, I printed it out and passed out the sheets to my family at night, and we learned the lyrics together and sang now that song as a part of who we are.

Number four, always sing along with the songs you know as you listen to Christian music. Don't become the audience. Music was never intended to be an audience sport, okay? It's intended to be a participatory thing. You are to sing to God. So, even if you can't really carry a tune, if you had it in a bucket, that's okay. Sing along with those who can, but sing yourself as an expression of your praise to God.

Number five, whenever you enjoy music, thank God for the gift He's given us. Music is a part of the person of God. It is an expression of who He is. He sings. He's surrounded by music all the time, and He's given us the privilege of sharing in that gift. Every time you enjoy music, whatever it is, thank Him for that amazing gift.

And finally, number six, if you honestly have to admit that you don't have a love for music, let me encourage you to study the texts that we looked at two weeks ago, where I laid out the priority that God has given music. Study them, meditate on them, think about them. Ask God to open your mind to truly understand the huge priority He's given to music. And ask God to give you a deep love for God-centered music that exalts Him.

Christian, He's given you music as a gift. Don't misuse the gift. It's not just for you. It's for the people around you and it's ultimately a way to return glory to the One who created it. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You so much for this passage and what profound and amazing truth it has presented to us even this morning. Thank You for the balance. Thank You for the perspective.

Forgive us, O God, for sitting here often in judgment on those who like a different style than we. Help us to remember that music is ultimately for the admonition and teaching of the people around us and not for ourselves.

Lord, may we sing, praying, and hoping that You will use those lyrics to inform others, to teach them, to admonish them as well as ourselves. And Father, most of all, help us to return to You the wonderful gift of music as an expression of our praise and love and adoration.

Father, I pray for those of us who are in Christ. Give us a deep-seated love for music that is centered in You and in Your Son and in His cross.

And Father, I pray for the person here this morning who really doesn't have that love at all because they're not true followers of Jesus Christ. They've never had a heart changed by the Spirit. Lord, may they see themselves in the spiritual diagnostic that Paul has given us this morning, and may they turn to you in faith and repentance.

We pray all of this for the glory of Christ.

Father, we pray that You would tune our hearts to sing Your praise. Amen.