

### **Three Primary Effects of the Spirit's Influence, Part 3**

Ephesians 5:19-21

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Perhaps you are aware if you have read anything about popular Christianity, today's evangelicalism, that there is an increasing push in the postmodern church, especially in the emerging church, to incorporate secular music into the church's corporate worship. Over the last few years, I have read articles, as perhaps you have, of churches using everything from groups like Coldplay to Van Halen, Creed, U2, Boston, Taylor Swift, and even Garth Brooks in the corporate worship of the church. A couple of years ago, I, with some curiosity, heard about a pastor in our area who did an entire series entitled "iGod," taking off on the word iPod. And each week, this pastor would play a secular song, truly secular, no references to God whatsoever, at the beginning of his message, and then his sermon was essentially exegeting that song, looking for God, looking for some spiritual theme in that secular song.

Now, why don't we include secular songs in our worship? Or more to the point, why do we include music at all? Well, the second commandment teaches us that God alone has prescribed, and has the right to prescribe, how we worship Him. The second commandment says that you're not to make of God any graven image. That wasn't that you were to have idols. The first commandment speaks against idols, or that is, false gods. The second commandment speaks about the form of worship, how you worship even the true God. You're not to make an image of the true God. So, we can only worship God as He prescribes. We decide what elements to include in the corporate worship based on what the Scripture teaches.

Now, there has always been agreement among the people of God on this basic principle because it grows out of the Reformation principle of "sola scriptura" and of course it was around before the Reformation. And that is that the Scripture alone is the inspired, the sole inspired, authority of what we believe and how we practice the Christian faith. Now, although there was agreement in principle on "sola scriptura," there was at the same time significant disagreement on how that actually fleshed out in what elements to include in the corporate worship. The Reformers took two different paths, and those two paths are still with us today.

Let me briefly explain them to you. Some followed what was called the normative principle and others the regulative principle. Again, let me briefly explain those two so you understand why churches are where they are today.

First of all, the Lutherans and the Anglicans joined with the Roman Catholics in embracing what theologians called the normative principle. The normative principle teaches this: whatever the Scripture does not forbid directly is acceptable in worship. In other words, the normative principle asks this question: does the Scripture forbid this practice? If not, then those who follow this principle would say it's permitted, it's allowed.

The Reformed embraced the opposite principle, the opposite position called the regulative principle. The regulative principle argues that only that which the Scripture directly prescribes is acceptable in the worship of God. Both the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is the foundation for what Presbyterians believe, and the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689, which was originally, although they've strayed far from it, what Baptists believe, both of them say this, "The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures." We don't get to decide how we worship God. The regulative principle asks, "Does Scripture command or directly sanction this practice?" If not, then it's not permitted. And you can see how the two different paths have gone, and why certain things are allowed in some churches and not in others.

Because of the inherent danger in violating the second command, that is, God prescribes how we worship, and we must do it in that way, because of the inherent danger of that, we as a church embrace the second of those principles, the regulative principle. That means the elements of our corporate worship are only those things that God commands. There are seven elements of worship the Scripture commands of us, and that's what happens after I open the service in prayer. Those seven elements are all that there will be in our worship because those are the things God has prescribed.

First of all, there is to be prayer. Number one, there is to be prayer to God. Prayers are prescribed as an act of worship. Secondly, there is to be giving. The New Testament prescribes giving as something that happens when the church gathers corporately. Third, there is to be the reading of Scripture. Fourth, there is to be the teaching of Scripture. Fifth, there is to occasionally be baptism, one of the ordinances prescribed by Christ. Sixth, there is to be the Lord's Table. We do that once a month here at Countryside. And then number seven, there is to be worship in music.

Those seven elements are the elements that are directly prescribed, directly commanded by God for the church to do when it gathers together. To add anything to that is to risk violating the second commandment and worshipping God in a way that He has not prescribed. When we do those seven things, and when we do them with the right heart, it honors God because it follows His own specific commands for our worship. Understand this. God's people sing in worship because He Himself has prescribed and commanded it to be part of the worship we return to Him. That's what Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand in Ephesians 5. So, in Ephesians 5:19, Paul addresses this issue of music in the church.

Now turn there with me to Ephesians 5. And just to remind you of the context, in verse 18 Paul has just told us that if we're going to walk in biblical wisdom, we must be filled by the Spirit. Look at verse 18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with" [or by] "the Spirit." As we have seen, that means that we must allow the Spirit of God to fill us with a deep understanding of the Word of God so that the Word directs and controls our thoughts and our attitudes and our actions. The Spirit is the agent that fills us, and He fills us, according to the parallel passage in Colossians 3, with the Scripture. We're to be under the influence of the Spirit.

Now, to be under the influence of the Spirit is to have certain effects of that influence. Just as in the first half of the verse, to be under the influence of alcohol produces certain effects, to be under the influence of the Spirit produces different effects. There are three primary effects or consequences or results of being under the influence of the Spirit, and you see them in verses 19 to 21. Number one is a love for God-centered music in verse 19. Secondly, a pattern of thankfulness in verse 20. And thirdly, a heart of submission in verse 21. Those things will be present in the life of a person who is filled by the Spirit with the Scripture, where there is a rich indwelling of the Word of God in a believer's life.

Now, we're looking at the first primary result or consequence of being filled by the Spirit with the Word. It is a love for God-centered music. 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 ..." Now notice that the word "speaking" is a participle as is "singing and making melody" later in the verse. Those participles all modify the main verb, which is in the previous verse, "be filled by the Spirit." In other words, these are the overflow of a life that is filled by the Spirit. When you're filled by the Spirit with the Word, these things will be a reality.

Now verse 19 is a kind of textbook on the role of music in the life of a believer. The Spirit has packed into this brief verse several insights into the role of music in our lives. The first insight,

and we've already seen this one a couple of weeks ago, is the purpose of music in the Christian's life. First of all, music serves a horizontal purpose. Look around you. Music is for one another. Notice how the verse begins, "speaking to one another" in our music. Now why do we speak to one another in our music? Well, the parallel passage, Colossians 3, tells us that we do it to teach one another and to admonish one another. The lyrics of the songs we sing teach us the truth about God and His Word, that's why it's so important we choose the right songs - and they admonish us, they urge us, they persuade us to do what we know is true, like to love Christ as we've been reminded this morning. So, music serves a horizontal purpose, but it also serves a vertical purpose. Notice the second half of verse 19, "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord ...". Music is others-directed to build them up in their faith, and music is God-directed vertically for worship. That's the purpose of music.

Now there's a second insight, that we've already seen as well in this verse about music, and that is the variety of music in the Christian's life. In verse 19 here, Paul identifies three types or kinds of lyrics that are acceptable in the worship of God, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. "Psalms" refers primarily to the Old Testament Psalter, the book of Psalms, and to the later songs that arise out of its poetry or that use the Psalms as a pattern. That's the psalms.

"Hymns" are those spiritual songs that set forth the truth about God and are actually usually addressed to God. This morning, we sang "Fairest Lord Jesus," and it was addressed directly to Christ. That is a hymn. It's praise of God addressed to God.

"Spiritual songs" refers to music that is neither psalms nor hymns, but has a biblically solid spiritual message. These are often songs about our own experience, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down." And many songs that we sing are a mix of these elements, but those are the three kinds of types of lyrics, the variety of music that's to be in our lives.

Now today, we come to a third insight about music that's found in this verse, and that is the instruments for music in the Christian's life, the instruments for music in the Christian's life. First, and most obviously, the human voice, the human voice. Notice verse 19 begins, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and singing..." Obviously, to speak is to use the human voice. And the Greek word that's translated "singing" here is the normal word for using the human voice in music. Now I'm not going to belabor this point because it's not disputed. No one argues that we as individuals shouldn't sing. So, you understand this, and this is what the Scripture teaches. The human voice is an acceptable instrument in the worship of God.

But the Scripture also teaches another category of instruments that are acceptable in the worship of God and it's this: all musical instruments, not only the human voice but all musical instruments. Now I'm going to come back to Ephesians 5 because I think we'll see it here as well, but first I want to go back and look at the Old Testament pattern for including musical instruments in the corporate worship of God. If you go back, obviously shortly after Adam, in the early generations after Adam, one of his descendants named Jubal invented instruments. And undoubtedly, when the godly line of Seth began there in Genesis 4, God's people began to use those instruments to worship Him.

But the first recorded example of musical instruments used in the worship of God is in Exodus 15. You don't need to turn there but in Exodus 15, you remember, God has just amazed the people of Israel at the Red Sea. You remember? He divided it for them. They walked through, you know, two million people walked through on dry land. And they get to the other side, and they watch those walls of water still standing up. And here comes the Egyptian army through that, through that break in the water, and God unleashes its fury and destroys the entire Egyptian army. And they compose a song. It's called the Song of Moses there in Exodus 15, and they sing it. And Exodus 15:20 tells us that Miriam, Moses' sister, and others sang and they played, they sang, accompanied by the playing of what's called the timbrel. That's something like our tambourine but without the metal jingles. It essentially was a handheld drum, a small little drum on which they played, and they sang this Song of Moses.

You can see other instances throughout the Old Testament, but, while instruments of various kinds were used in worship of God before the monarchy, David is the one who made them a part of the worship of the tabernacle and later the temple. In fact, according to 1 Chronicles 23 and 2 Chronicles 7, David actually invented a number of musical instruments. Not only was he an amazing poet, we have that recorded for us in the Psalms. Not only was he an incredible musician as Samuel tells us. He also was an inventor of musical instruments. Now in David's time, they numbered the people, and there were of the tribe of Levi, those specially set apart to serve God. There were some thirty-eight thousand men who were mature men. And those thirty-eight thousand were to serve God in the temple. Of those thirty-eight thousand, David appointed four thousand to be responsible for the music at the tabernacle and later at the temple.

Most of those four thousand Levites who were chosen to be involved in music were to be instrumentalists. Listen to 1 Chronicles 15:16, "David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives the singers, with instruments of music, harps, lyres, loud-sounding cymbals, to raise shouts of joy." First Chronicles 23:5, "four thousand were praising the Lord

with the instruments which David made for giving praise.” I think that’s a good goal for us to try to reach. I’ll have to encourage Seth that, you know, four thousand would be a great number of instrumentalists for us to have in the orchestra.

Now, when did they play? When did this amazing group of musicians play? And by the way, probably all four thousand only played on really high festival occasions, major events. On the other days, they would serve by rotation just as the rest of the priests did. But 1 Chronicles 23:30 - 31 tell us when these instruments were played,

They are to stand every morning to thank and to praise the LORD, and likewise at evening ... on the sabbaths, the new moons, and the fixed festivals in the number *set* by the ordinance concerning them, continually before the LORD.

What you need to understand is that these musicians were to lead worship in music at the tabernacle and later at the temple every morning and every evening of every day including every sabbath and every special feast day, amazing. It would have been a dramatic thing to have heard at the temple.

Now if you read 1 and 2 Chronicles, you’ll notice that there were instruments included in this from all the categories of the instruments we have. When we classify instruments today, we say there are brass, there’s wind instruments, there’s strings, and there’s percussion. Well, all of those were present in the prescription God gave. Brass and wind for example, there were trumpets, ram’s horns, flutes, and pipes. Strings, there were lyres, harps, ten-strings, and the lute. Percussion, there were cymbals and timbrels, those small drums I mentioned earlier. Now what’s important to note here is that there were a mixture of instruments. Some of these instruments were specifically invented by David for the worship of God. Others of them were instruments that were simply the instruments of ancient Israel. So, that means that God, by prescribing that those be used, sanctioned all instruments from all the categories of instruments for worship. Now that’s a very important thing for us to get into our heads.

Let me just say, I understand that there are certain instruments each of us like more than we like others. There are others we don’t like, and that’s okay. We can all have our own opinions. But biblically, understand this. There are no instruments that are off limits in the worship of God. Trumpets and timpanis, violins and violas, malharps , and marimbas, drums, guitars and organs are all acceptable in the worship of God. So, if there’s one of those or more that you have trouble

with, understand that's your personal preference. That is not a biblical warrant. So, there's this amazing variety of instruments.

Now, when you look at the Old Testament pattern, in addition to the orchestra, you see choirs and vocalists who were set apart from the congregation, prescribed by God to be part of Israel's worship. Of those four thousand Levite musicians I mentioned earlier, two hundred and eighty-eight of them were to be a huge choir. Look at 1 Chronicles, 1 Chronicles 25. First Chronicles 25, and notice verse 5. You have the children of Heman, the king's seer. There were fourteen sons and three daughters. They were in some kind of a supervisory role. Verse 6,

All of these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, and harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the direction of the king. Their number who were trained in singing to the LORD, with their relatives, all who were skillful, was 288.

That's also a good target, 4000 instrumentalists and 288 choir members. Now notice in verse 5 that the choir that sang for the Lord was composed of both men and women. Also, if you fast forward to Ezra, Ezra 2, there, we're told there were 200 male and female singers. They were accomplished musicians. In fact, the Jewish Talmud says that the choir members involved in this had a five-year training period before they were actually allowed to sing.

It's interesting as well, when you look at this, that God appointed music directors to lead the musical element of the corporate worship of ancient Israel. At the return of the ark, flip just back a few pages to 1 Chronicles 15, at the return of the ark, you see this beginning when they're getting ready for the real tabernacle worship and eventually the temple. There's a music director. First Chronicles 15:22 tells us about his qualifications, "Chenaniah, the chief of the Levites, was in charge of the singing; he gave instruction in singing because he was skillful." There's his qualification for this job. And notice in verse 27 you see his job description. Now, this is again describing the coming, the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, "Now David was clothed with a robe of fine linen with all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah the leader of the singing *with* the singers. David also wore an ephod of linen." So you have this musical director.

Now, if you fast forward, David now lived about a thousand years before Christ. If you fast forward six hundred years to the very end of Old Testament history, you see exactly the same

thing going on six hundred years later. Look at Nehemiah, Nehemiah 12:42. Here you have a number of men mentioned. “And the singers sang, with Jezrahiah *their* leader ...” Verse 46, “For in the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times” [that would have been for Nehemiah’s time six hundred years earlier,] “*there were* leaders of the singers, songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving to God.” So Nehemiah, as he reestablishes the worship of God with the people of God returned from Babylonian exile, sets up the same sort of system where there is a leader of the music. Fifty-five of the Psalms, by the way, begin with the phrase, “For the choir director.”

So, music in the Old Testament worship of God was a huge thing, a choir and a choir director and an amazing orchestra. Those who are scholars in the worship of ancient Israel write this, “No service of worship” [no service of worship] “was celebrated in the temple without a minimum of twelve singers and twelve instrumentalists.” Never was anything happening in the temple without twelve, at least, singers and twelve instrumentalists. Music was part of the worship of God in Old Testament Israel.

But it wasn’t just the Levites who played and sang. There was congregational singing in ancient Israel. There were a variety of musical instruments, there were vocalists, there was a choir, there was a music director, and there was congregational singing. But understand this. These things were not David’s idea. It’s not that David woke up one morning and said, “You know, I think it’d be a good idea for us to have these things as part of the worship of God.” They came by divine command. The command for singing by the congregation, for choirs, for musical instruments and for a music director was from the Lord.

Look at 2 Chronicles 29. Second Chronicles 29, this is in the days of Hezekiah. So, this is after David. Things had gotten bad. The temple worship had essentially ceased for all intents and purposes, and now Hezekiah is restoring it, a godly king. Second Chronicles 29, look at verse 25, as he’s restoring the temple worship, “He then stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with harps and lyres” [now watch this]; “according to the command of David and of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the command” [for these things] “was from the LORD through His prophets.” So, David just didn’t decide this would be a good idea. This is what God prescribed to be done in His worship in ancient Israel.

Now, don’t misunderstand what I’m saying. I’m not saying necessarily that these things are commanded for every church today. I’m saying this does establish the pattern that this was prescribed by God. This was the pattern of ancient Israel. All of those things that God



commanded were intended to encourage and support the singing of God's people. Look at verse 26,

The Levites stood with the musical instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD also began with the trumpets, *accompanied* by the instruments of David, king of Israel. While the whole assembly worshiped, the singers also sang and the trumpets sounded; and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

The point is, while the singers sang and the instruments played, the congregation was involved in worshiping as well. And since many of the psalms call for the people of God all to sing and worship, they were joining in as well. That's the Old Testament pattern.

Now, let's move from that to the New Testament arguments for including musical instruments in the church's worship because some look at the New Testament, and they come to strange conclusions. Men we respect, John Calvin, for example, advocated that in the church we should sing psalms only and never with any instruments. The Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli excluded all music from the corporate worship. There shouldn't be any music, he said, in the corporate worship. There are churches today like, for example, the Church of Christ that's common here in Texas would say things like this, "The instruments and the choir, —those, it's true. Those were in Old Testament Israel. We won't deny that, but you can't find them in the New Testament. That's not for the New Testament church. That's part of the ceremonies of the old covenant." There's currently a battle raging in some Presbyterian churches about whether they should have choirs and instruments and if they should only sing metrical psalms as opposed to anything else.

What about it? What position should we take? Well, there are several clear arguments against those positions and in support of using all these helps in our worship in music, all kinds of instruments in the worship of God both privately as well as in corporate worship. What are the arguments? Here they are.

Number one, the Old Testament divine prescription has never been repealed. The Old Testament divine prescription has never been repealed. God Himself prescribed, as I showed you, the use of instruments and choirs and music directors in the Old Testament, and no New Testament text forbids the use of those things in worship. It's not like the sacrificial system or all the high and holy days. That ceremony is all dismissed in the New Testament. Explicitly, we are told that

those things are not to be a part of our worship. That's not true with these things. With the high and holy days, Colossians 2 makes it clear sabbaths, new moon festivals, annual festivals, no man is to judge us with respect to those things. Hebrews makes it clear the Old Testament sacrificial system is gone. What about all of those laws about putting people to death for various crimes? Well, Romans 13 makes it clear those have all been transitioned to secular government, and now the government bears the sword. So, all those things are changed in the New Testament. Everything I've shown you from the Old Testament in regards to the worship of God in music, there's no indication in the New Testament that it's ever changed. It's not like the ceremonial law where those things are explicitly set aside in the New Testament.

There's a second New Testament argument for using musical instruments in the corporate worship of God, and it's this. The New Testament command to sing psalms has in it an implied approval of the use of instruments. The New Testament command to sing psalms has in it an implied approval of the use of instruments. We are told, as we've seen both in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, to sing psalms, speaking of the Old Testament Psalter, the book of Psalms.

And the psalms themselves prescribe, command, the use of instruments in worship. This is true in the psalm titles for example, you know, those little descriptions that come right before the psalm? You realize those are ancient; that is, they existed at least two hundred years before Christ because they're in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Hebrews, the Jewish people, considered them part of the canon, part of the inspired text and not part of the notes. They even numbered it as a verse in Hebrew, which sort of throws off the versification between Hebrew and English.

But more importantly, both our Lord and His apostles considered those inscriptions at the beginning of the psalms as authoritative, and they argued on the basis of them. You can see this in Mark 12, our Lord uses one, in Acts 2 and Acts 13, in all three of those cases, our Lord and the apostles used those little inscriptions at the beginning of the psalm as authoritative.

And so, notice what those inscriptions say. Look at Psalm 4 as an example. Psalm 4, "For the choir director; on stringed instruments." Psalm 5, "For the choir director; for flute accompaniment." Psalm 6, "For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-string lyre," etc., etc., etc. Over and over again, the psalms that we are commanded to sing instruct that they be sung with musical instruments.

But not just in the titles, it's also true in the body of the psalm. Let me just give you a couple of examples. Psalm 33:2, this isn't in one of those titles or inscriptions. This is inside the body of the psalm itself. Psalm 33:2, "Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him" [by the way, that's our word translating "make melody" from our verse in Ephesians 5:19, sing praises to Him or make melody to Him] "with a harp of ten strings." Psalm 98:5, "Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout joyfully before the King, the Lord."

But turn with me to Psalms 92 because this one's unique because of its inscription, its title. Psalm 92 is "a Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day." So this was to be sung in the corporate worship of the people of God on the day God prescribed for Him to be worshiped by His people. Now notice what the psalm says, verse 1,

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;  
to declare Your ... [unfailing love] in the morning And Your faithfulness by night  
[how?] With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, With resounding music upon  
the lyre. For You, O Lord, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing  
for joy at the work of Your hands.

So, the psalm titles, the body of the psalms tell us, the very psalms we're commanded to sing tell us to worship God with instruments. By the way, fifty-five of the psalms that Paul commands us to sing are addressed to the choir director. That sanctions both the use of a choir and of a music director.

Also, the Hebrew word translated "psalms" in the Old Testament and the Greek word in both the Septuagint and the New Testament, all of that can mean and originally did mean to sing accompanied by a musical instrument. That's what the word "psalm" means. It means to pluck the strings on an instrument. So, the very command to sing psalms is at its heart at least permission and perhaps a command to use musical instruments. Harold Hoehner in his commentary writes, "Although one cannot be dogmatic, the New Testament church may have followed the Old Testament and Judaistic practice as it had in other instances by singing the psalms with a stringed instrument."

In addition, go back to now, to Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5, look at verse 19 again. Notice in the second half of verse 19, "singing and making melody ..." Now why would Paul use both those words if he intends them to mean exactly the same thing? "Singing" refers to producing music

with the human voice. “Making melody” is literally in the Greek text “psalming,” singing and psalming, the word that can and often does mean to pluck a stringed instrument. So, it’s possible here Paul was referring both to singing with the human voice and to the use of instruments.

There’s a third New Testament argument for the use of instruments in worship, and it’s the practice of heaven, the practice of heaven. In heaven, the church will worship God with singing accompanied by instruments. Revelation 5:8,

... the four living creatures [that is, those majestic cherubim and that exist before the throne of God] and the twenty-four elders [representing the church throughout the book of Revelation] fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp ...  
And they sang a new song ...

Now, whether it will specifically be a harp, or whether it’ll be some other musical instrument, the point is there are musical instruments used in heaven in the worship of God.

So, while I can respect those who come to different conclusions from the biblical data, I certainly cannot agree with them. To me, and to the other elders of this church, the biblical evidence is completely overwhelming that it is acceptable to use not only the human voice, but all the kinds of musical instruments that exist to bring glory and praise to God.

There’s a fifth insight into music and worship found in verse 19, the attitude of music in the Christian’s life, the attitude of music. I said fifth. I think it’s the fourth insight. The attitude of music in the Christian’s life, notice verse 19, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart ...” That prepositional phrase explains how we are to sing, with your heart. It’s not talking about in your heart as some translations have. It doesn’t mean you’re to do it privately as opposed to publicly, internally as opposed to externally. It’s with your heart. “Heart” here refers to your entire inner self, your immaterial being.

That means our worship in music is not to be half-hearted but whole-hearted, done with enthusiasm, with energy. It shouldn’t be merely external but internal, with genuineness, with sincerity. Colossians 3 puts it like this, Colossians 3:16, “singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Our singing is to be with our hearts and from our hearts. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, we’re to worship not only in truth but in spirit, with our whole being. Our worship in music is to be internal and authentic. It’s to be passionate. It’s to be active. That

means more than just moving your lips, letting words come out of your mouth. It means when we sing, your heart is engaged. You are participating, and your whole life is a life of worship. So when you sing, it's merely the overflow of that reality.

Let me put it a different way. God finds singing that is unattached from the heart and life revolting and disgusting. He said this through His prophet Amos. Amos prophesied in a time when Israel was still going through the motions, but their heart wasn't true to God. Listen to what God says through Amos in Amos 5:21. He says,

"I hate, I reject your festivals," [that is, your annual festivals that I told you to do] "nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings," [remember now, God commanded them to do that] I will not accept *them*; and I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings." [now watch what He says in Amos 5:23.] Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps." [Why? Because it was just external, it was just form. Their heart wasn't in it.] Verse 24, "Let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

In other words, get your heart right with Me. Don't just go through the form. I find the form of your music, noise and disgusting, and I won't listen to it. That's what God said. When we sing, we're to be sincere. We're to be authentic. We're to really mean what we're singing, and we're to sing from a life that reflects a worship of the true God.

And we certainly shouldn't just be standing there, not singing at all. You know, our family attended a church back a couple of years where very few people around us were singing. In fact, I felt a bit conspicuous. I always feel a little that way, but you know, on this particular occasion, I'm standing there, and I'm singing out, and nobody else is singing, and they're all sort of looking at me like, "What's wrong with that guy?" I can tell you this. Where that's true, there is not the Spirit's presence. Because where the Spirit is, He produces a love for God-centered music.

You say, "Well, you don't understand. You have never heard my voice. Listen. I can't sing." Don't worry about that. Neither can the Jonas Brothers, and look how far it's taken them. Listen. When you get to heaven, God's not going to say to you, "You know, your voice is so bad that I wish you had just kept it quiet and not sung to me." You think God's going to say that when you stand before Him? No, of course He's not going to say that. He's commanded us all to sing with

our hearts to Him. Make a joyful noise. It's okay. Don't just lip sync. Be passionate. Sing out not for your neighbor, but so God is pleased as you're singing with your heart to Him.

There's another attitude at the very end of verse 19, not only with our hearts, but notice "to the Lord." The Greek word for "Lord" there is "Kurios." Every other time that word is used in Ephesians, it's referring to Jesus Christ. Paul's point is this. We are to sing to Jesus Christ with our hearts to our Lord. As we sing, and as we play, we are to make a conscious, intentional decision. You should have made this decision this morning as we sang. You should have immediately reminded yourself that Jesus Christ is the audience to whom I'm singing. And you should sing and play in a way that you are intentionally directing your worship to the Lord just as if He were standing on this platform this morning.

Let me just ask you honestly and sincerely. How would your worship in music have been different this morning, how much more engaged would your mind have been, how much more would it have been with your heart if Jesus Christ had been standing on this platform? That is how we are to worship when we sing.

Worship and music must be a priority for every one of us (why?) because God commands it. He's prescribed music and worship as one of the ways we express our worship to Him, and it should be offered to God from our hearts. The focus is to be on the lyrics, both to teach one another horizontally, and vertically to express our praise to God Himself. Music directors and choirs and every kind of musical instrument, those are acceptable, and they can help organize us and lead us and support our worship. But in the end, each of us is to truly worship Christ as if He were here from our hearts.

Music is an amazing gift. It's really a gift of heaven. Music existed in the presence of God before He made this world, before He made the universe. The angels sang in celebration of God's creative power as He made everything. God Himself sings. Music will be our preoccupation forever, and it should be the preoccupation of every true believing heart here.

You know, I think Psalm 150 is a fitting conclusion to not only our study, but to the Bible's inspired songbook. Turn with me to Psalm 150. This is the call. As the inspired songbook of Scripture ends, this is the crescendo on which it ends,

Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse.  
[What do we praise God for?] Verse 2, Praise Him for His mighty deeds; [what

He's done, His work of creation and providence and redemption] Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. [In other words, praise God not only for what He's done but for who He is - for His grace and His mercy and His compassion and His love and His holiness and His righteousness. How do we praise Him?] Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

May God help us to understand that He has commanded and prescribed worship and music, and it is to be done with our hearts, from our hearts, addressed intentionally in our minds to our Lord Jesus as if He were standing here, and we were worshiping Him in person. Anything less is a stain on the nature and character of God. May God help us individually and corporately to be a singing church.

Let's pray together.

Father, how can we begin to express our gratitude for the amazing clarity of Your Word, for the amazing gift of music. Lord, help us to enjoy the gift of music, but Lord, remind us often that You didn't give us that gift primarily for our enjoyment, primarily for listening to what we want to listen to because it moves us in some way. But O God, remind us that music is a gift that we can give back to You as we praise You with our lips and with our hearts and with our instruments. Father, tune our hearts to sing Your praise.

I pray for the person here this morning, O God, who has no heart to sing Your praise. Lord, help that man or woman to see, that young person to see, that they really don't know You, that praise is the overflow of a heart that has come to know Your salvation, Your rescue, eternal life, the beauty of Christ. We just can't help ourselves. It's in our spiritual DNA.

Father, I pray if there's someone here who has to admit that's not a reality that You would bring that conviction to bear upon his or her heart and that sometime today they would get alone with You and pour out their heart in true repentance, seeking Christ and Him alone as their only hope. And Father, may they then understand what it means to praise.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.