

Sermons
The Legacy of Music in Worship (Part 2)
Selected Scriptures
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Turning now to our study of the Word of God together, I'm looking forward, Lord willing, in early September to returning to our verse-by-verse study of the book of 1 John and, in the evening, to Revelation. But we're taking a break this summer to consider several things and, right now, we're considering some of the elements of the legacy of knowledge and practice that have been handed down to us by the church in the past, but that the Christian church today has largely lost. It's like when the Library of Alexandria was destroyed, and the world lost thousands of years of human knowledge. Same thing has happened, sadly, to today's Christian church in many regards. So, we're looking at some of those things that used to be understood but have been largely lost in the legacy that was passed on to us.

First of all, we considered the legacy of expository preaching, that that is, in fact, what the church has always done and even Old Testament believers. We looked at Moses and Ezra and others. This is the pattern of the teaching of God's Word.

Last week, we began to focus on the recovery of the legacy of worship in music. Now, the word "music" is in and of itself a hard word to define. I don't know if you've ever thought about that. How would you define music? Well, the best I found was Webster's definition. It says this: an art of sound in time that expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and color. Music.

As we discovered last week, God is constantly surrounded with music and He Himself sings. So, it's not a surprise that Christians love music, especially music that focuses on God. In fact, in every point in church history when there's been a true revival, that has happened through the clear preaching and teaching of the Word of God. It's a recovery of God' Word. But following that recovery of the Word of God, you find always in its wake a fresh breeze of new God-honoring music that has swept across the church, because wherever there is an authentic work of the Spirit, through the Word of God, there will be music.

Now, thankfully, music is not a problem in our own church, and I'm grateful for that. But there are a couple of reasons that I'm spending more time on this issue than I am on others. First of all, because many Christians have an unbiblical philosophy of music and, secondly, because music is a crucial part of our worship, both individually and corporately. You understand that the issue of music is hotly debated and often it's characterized, that debate is characterized by misunderstanding.

Perhaps you've heard the old story about the farmer who went to the city one weekend and attended a big city church. And when he got back to the farm, his wife asked him, "So, what was it like to visit that big city church, that inner city church?" And the farmer said, "You know, it was good. But there were some things that were different. They sang praise songs instead of hymns." His wife said, "Praise songs! What are those?" He said, "Well, they're sort of like hymns, but they're different." She said, "Like how?" He said, "Well, it's like this. If our cows got loose, and they were in the corn, and I were to say to you, 'Martha, Martha, Martha, oh, Martha, Martha, Martha, the cows, the big cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the white cows, the black and white cows, the cows, the cows, the cows are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, corn, corn, corn...' And if I repeated that two or three times, well, that would be a praise song. But if I were to say, 'Oh, Martha, dear Martha, hear thou my cry, inclinest 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. Harkenest they in God's Son, or His reign, unless from the mild tempting corn they are fenced. Ye, those cows in glad, bovine, rebellious delight have broken free their shackles, their warm pins 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.' And if I were to do verses 1, 3, and 4 and change keys on the last verse, well, that would be a hymn."

That's obviously a serious oversimplification and, fortunately, we sing both traditional and contemporary songs that have much richer lyrics. But the farmer is onto something and that is, there are in fact distinct styles of worship music.

And today, we're going to consider how to think biblically about those different music styles. We're studying what Scripture teaches about music and specifically music and worship. We're discovering that Scripture gives us several important insights into this issue of music and worship.

Now, last time, just to remind you where we were last week, last time we began with a biblical critique of music and worship. We looked generally and said, when you examine what Scripture teaches about music and worship, there are some problems with contemporary worship, and I gave you a list that we're now working our way through and seeing the Scripture address those issues.

Secondly, we looked at a biblical history of music. Music predated the creation. The angels sang at the creation. Music, I believe, may very well be as old as God Himself. It may be an eternal expression of the mind of God but, certainly, it was created if it was created before everything else. It was created because the angels sang at the creation and it spans all of human history, both Old Testament worshippers, New Testament worshippers, and as we saw in Revelation, there will be music in eternity accompanied by instruments. Music is an eternal expression of worship and praise to God.

Now, thirdly, last time we looked at the biblical priority of music and worship and I gave you four primary arguments. First of all, God commands every believer to worship and music individually. Secondly, a love for God-centered music is the fruit of being filled by the Spirit of God. We saw that in Ephesians 5. Thirdly, Christ commands the church to worship and music in its corporate worship. And then, finally, last time we considered the fact that our Lord Himself sings and we will sing with them in eternity.

Today, I want us to move on from those three insights to a fourth insight. Let's begin with this one: the biblical purposes of music in worship. The biblical purposes of music in worship. There are three of them.

Let's start with the personal purpose. The personal purpose. Turn with me to Psalm 119. There's a fascinating passage at the end of this remarkable longest chapter in the Bible, a chapter related to the beauty of the Word of God. Psalm 119:171: "Let my lips utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes." Now, watch verse 172. Here is the response to the fact that we need to praise God because, as we study the Word of God, the Spirit of God teaches us its meaning. Here's how we respond. Verse 172: "Let my tongue sing of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness." Verse 172 isn't just making the point we should sing about the Scripture, but the second half of verse 172 is making it clear we are to sing the content of His Word - "for [because] all your commandments are righteous." We're rehearsing the Word of God and the truths that are in the Word of God.

Why? Because we're rehearsing what we've learned. That's the point. You study the Word of God. The Spirit of God teaches you the Word, and you turn that knowledge, you turn that truth into music. Why? Because it reminds us. It reminds us of the truth. When we marry biblical lyrics to music, it helps us remember the truth of God's Word.

This is very clear in 1 Chronicles 16:4. There, David appoints some of the Levites to serve as musicians at the Tabernacle, before the ark of the Lord. And he appointed them to serve as musicians to this end: "even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel..." Now, what's interesting is the Hebrew word translated "celebrate", in the New American Standard, is literally the Hebrew word "to remember". David appointed musicians at the Tabernacle to sing the truth of God's Word in order to help the people of God remember what God has said.

Poetry put to music has always had that power. I mean, think about it. When you hear a few notes of a song, a song that you heard so many years ago and that you thought you'd forgotten, what happens? You hear those few notes and the lyrics pop back into your mind. Why? Because music is an amazing vehicle to remember, to remember. And music in worship enables

us to remember the truth. John Frame, in his book on worship writes this, “Poetic, musical forms impart this vividness and memorability to God’s words. That vividness and memorability in turn drive the Word into our hearts so that it becomes precious to us and motivates us to praise and obedience.” Do you hear what he’s saying? He’s saying when you marry the truth of God’s Word with poetry and music, it becomes memorable to you and that the memory of that truth drives the truth into your heart, and that makes the truth become more precious to you, and it motivates you both to praise God and to obey the truth that’s in the song you’re singing. It reminds us of the truth of God.

Old Testament believers committed many of the Psalms to memory so that they could worship corporately. They could sing together. We see that primarily in what are called the Songs of Ascent - Psalms 120 to 134. Songs of Ascent simply meant these are the songs that the children of Israel sang as they ascended from their towns to Jerusalem, to the temple for those three appointed annual feasts. They sang them together as they traveled because they memorized them. They knew them. They had the truth committed to memory because of the power of poetry and music combined. The truth about God, His ways, His words - those truths are so much more easily remembered when married with music. We sing Christian music because it helps us, personally, remember and rehearse the great truths that we have come to know.

A second purpose for music in worship is a horizontal purpose. A horizontal purpose. Turn with me to Ephesians 5, and you can keep your finger in Ephesians 5 because we’re going to be back and forth here a lot. There’s so much in this text. But Ephesians 5:19... Right after he says I want you to be filled by the Spirit with the Word of God, he says, and here’s what it will produce - verse 19 of Ephesians 5: “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...” Now, if you’re reading the Bible inquisitively, and I hope you are, the thing that should immediately jump out at you is, “Wait a minute. I thought music was addressed to God. Why does it say speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs?”

Well, Paul answers that question in the parallel passage, a book written at the same time. Turn to Colossians 3, Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you...” And, by the way, that is a parallel expression to “be filled with the Spirit” in Ephesians 5. They mean the

same thing. “To be filled by the Spirit with the Word” is the same thing as “letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you”. And look at the fruit of it, verse 16: “with all wisdom [here’s what it means to speak to one another] teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...” We speak to one another in our music to teach and admonish.

Now, teaching means to instruct or to impart a knowledge of the truth. Admonishing means to warn, to exhort, to persuade to do the truth, to believe and do the truth. So, teaching is imparting the truth. Admonishing is persuading to believe or practice the truth. Think about this. One of the chief purposes of music in the church is to teach one another spiritual truth. It’s a tool for mutual edification.

When you sing here in the church as we gather, when you sing wherever there are other believers, sing to one another. Don’t be afraid to make eye contact with one another. You know, we live in an emotional driven day where it’s all about me and God and it’s, you know, I’m keeping my eyes to myself and if I look anywhere, I’m looking up and... No! Don’t be afraid to look around and make eye contact and affirm together and say, “I believe that truth. Do you?” We sing to one another. When we sing, we’re to speak to one another.

And that really takes place in three ways, we could say. We sing to teach others biblical truths they don’t know. You realize every time we sing, there are people around us who don’t know those truths that we’re singing. There are people here this morning who don’t know the importance of the church about which we sang. They really live in an individualistic world, and they think it’s all about them and God. They don’t understand that the church matters to God. As we sang those songs, we were teaching one another, in some cases, truths that people really don’t know.

Also, we sing to remind and to rehearse truths that they do know for their edification and encouragement. We sing to one another in some cases, because, yes, they know those truths, but they need to be reminded of them. They need to be encouraged by them. They need to be fed by that truth. Maybe they’ve had a challenging week, with trials and difficulties, and we’re talking about God sustaining us through trials. They know that. But they need to be encouraged in that.

So, we sing not only to teach the truth to people who don't know it, we sing to remind and rehearse truths to people who do.

And then we sing to exhort or persuade others to believe and practice those truths. In other words, when we sing, we're not only saying that's right, but there's a whole lot in the songs we sing about things we ought to do. And we're saying, "You need to do that; I need to do that. Let's do this together."

I'm often reminded of that. I'll give you an example. We sing a song that says, "Use my ransomed life in any way you choose." Every time I sing that phrase, I'm thinking about myself and going, "Lord, use my ransomed life any way You choose." And I'm looking around thinking about you and saying, "Lord, help every person in this church to have that kind of heart of devotion to Jesus Christ, to say 'Use my ransomed life in any way You choose.'"

So, understand then, music is primarily communication. It is not entertainment. It primarily serves a mental purpose, not an emotional one. Practically, that means that we should choose and sing songs not primarily because we like the sound or the style of music, but because of the lyrics. Brothers and sisters don't choose music simply because of the way it makes you feel, but because of the way it makes you think. Our worship and music - let me put it bluntly. Listen carefully. Our worship and music will only go as high as our understanding of God's Word goes deep. I mean, you can whip up emotion in response to music, but your true worship will only go as high as your understanding of the Word of God goes deep, because you have to know who God is and what He's done to really worship Him. That means, obviously, our lyrics should be biblical. It's goes without saying they shouldn't be contrary to biblical truths, but they also should be permeated with biblical truth. That's why we talk about singing the Bible. That's Psalm 119:54: "Your statutes are my songs..."

Now, listen carefully. There is another critical implication of the fact that Christian music is to edify and teach others. We speak to one another. There's one more crucial implication. I don't want you to miss this. When it comes to the music that we sing corporately, your first thought should not be about you - the style you like, the songs you prefer. In corporate worship, your

concern should be about others. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, it talks about when the church assembles, there's music involved and it says, "Let all things be done for edification." Let, even our music, be done for the edification of others.

Now, what does that mean practically? Let me just be blunt. If you personally prefer traditional music, if you love the hymns and you're not so keen on other styles, don't sit and sulk when we sing contemporary music. Don't complain in your heart. Instead, sing out so those who do respond to contemporary music will be taught and admonished by those lyrics. If, on the other hand, you prefer contemporary music, don't check out and inwardly complain when we're singing older hymns. No, be all in and pray for those who love traditional music that they will learn from the truth of the lyrics that were singing together and be persuaded to obey them. Music in the corporate worship is not primarily about you. It's about God and it's about others, speaking to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. We're to teach others the truth and we're to admonish them to believe and practice it.

There's a third purpose of music in worship. Not only a personal purpose (remembering God's Word), and a horizontal purpose (speaking to one another these truths), but there's also obviously a vertical purpose. Look again at Ephesians 5:19: "...singing and making melody with your heart [notice this] to the Lord..." Music is others-directed for their edification. It's also God-directed for genuine worship. Music expresses our hearts to God. When we sing in worship, our mind should not only be focused on others but should also deliberately focus on God.

Think about it this way. You know we talk about what worship is. Jesus put it this way. He said God is seeking true worshippers. This is John 4 - His interchange with the Samaritan woman. He said God is seeking true worshippers and those who worship Him, listen carefully, must worship in spirit and in truth. That means our worship, first of all, has to be in accordance with the truth. It has to reflect God's Word. But to worship in spirit means, not in the Holy Spirit (that's small 's'), it means to be all in, to worship with your whole being, to be engaged in what you're doing.

Now, how do you do that? How do you worship in spirit in the elements of our service? Let me give you a couple of examples. What do you do if I'm praying? I'm leading us in prayer, like I did a few minutes ago after we read the Scripture. What should you be doing? What you should not be doing is letting your mind wander to something you did this week, or what you're having for lunch, or some problem you're trying to work out or, you know, "Why is Tom praying so long?" That's what shouldn't be happening. What should be happening is you should be engaging your heart to pray with me. You affirm what I'm praying. You let that spur your own thoughts, and you express it in your own words. Maybe you get distracted a moment with your own prayer to God, because of something I prayed, and then you come back, and you join me again. We're all swept along together in prayer. That's what it means to worship in spirit. It means you're all in.

Same thing with singing. When we're singing, you're not standing there with your mouth moving, but your mind unengaged. You are in with your mind. You are thinking, "God is the audience. I am singing to God as well as to the people around me. I'm teaching one another. I'm doing that, but I'm also now going back and forth. I'm thinking about directing this song to God who's worthy of my praise." That's what Jesus meant.

In music, we express our praise to God. Psalm 66:4: "All the earth will worship You, and will sing praises to You; they will sing praises to Your name." In music, we express our thanksgiving to God. Colossians 3:16: "...singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Psalm 33:2: "Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings." In music, we even express our repentance to God. Psalm 51 is a song, a song of repentance. We sing our repentance to God. In music, we express our petitions to God. Psalm 5 begins, you know, it's for the choir director to be sung publicly. And then, the first three verses of Psalm 5 are prayer requests (petitions). We sing requests to God. So, music then, expresses our hearts to God. It's in that sense that we sing to the Lord.

But all of that is ultimately toward one great end, and that is, to glorify God, because the chief purpose for which God gave us music was to bring Him glory. Romans 11:36: "For from Him [God is the source of all things] and through Him [God is the One who sustains all things] and to

Him [God is the end, the goal, the purpose of all things. And then it says] To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” Ultimately, everything God has given us, including music, exists for one, great, eternal purpose - to bring Him glory. That’s ultimately why there is music. It’s not just for our selfish use. It’s a tool to help us glorify God.

Notice Ephesians 5:19 again. He says, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart [notice this] to the Lord...” Now, what’s interesting about that is, in Colossians 3:16, He says, “*sing to God*”, meaning the Father. But here he says, “to the Lord”. Every other occurrence of the word “Lord” (*kurios* in the Greek) in this letter refers to Jesus Christ. So, Paul is demanding that our songs not only be sung to the Father, but also to Christ the Son.

And, of course, that doesn’t surprise us. I mean, hymns in the book of Revelation are addressed to both the Father and the Son. This is in fact the distinction of all truly Christian singing.

It’s one of the things that bothers me about music - Seth and I have talked about this often. A lot of the music that’s written today plays to the lowest common denominator. It’s written so that the widest possible audience can sing it, regardless of their theology. So, a lot of the songs are about God as Creator. That’s great! They should be. But a lot of the songs don’t get specific. I’m not talking about the songs we sing. I’m talking about the larger Christian church - don’t get very specific on Jesus and the gospel. Why? Because they want the widest possible audience to embrace it. It’s a tragedy. Listen, somebody shouldn’t be able to come into this service, who doesn’t believe in Jesus Christ and the biblical gospel, and be comfortable with the music we sing.

Pliny the Younger, in a famous letter to the Emperor Trajan (about 112 AD), described Christians like this. He said, “They are those who ‘recited to one another in turns (he’s talking about antiphonal singing) a hymn to Christ as God.’“ This is what Christians do. Their music is Christ-centered and cross-centered as well as God-centered.

Let me just stop and say, there's nothing wrong with listening to secular music. Music is a gift and it's for our enjoyment as long as the lyrics, of course, are not contrary to the commands of Scripture. I'll tell you, personally, there are very few kinds of music I don't like, I don't enjoy. But if your favorite music is more about your musical choices than about Christ, there's a problem. And the heart of the problem is deeper than your music taste. It means that your heart is not filled with the Word of God. It means you're not as spiritually mature as perhaps you think you are because the spirit-filled Christian (is what Ephesians 5:18-19 are saying) - the spirit-filled Christian loves God-centered, Christ-centered, cross-centered music.

So, those are the biblical purposes of music. There is a personal purpose - remembering the Word of God and rehearsing it in my own heart for my own encouragement and strength and edification. There is a horizontal purpose - we speak to one another in our music. And there's a vertical purpose - we sing to the Lord.

That brings us to a fifth insight we learn from Scripture about music and it's this: the biblical types of music and worship. The biblical types of music and worship. Let me, first of all, address the issue of music styles. Now, some Christians believe, and I grew up in a circle where there were people who believed and argued that, regardless of the lyrics, any worship music that even faintly sounds like secular contemporary music isn't appropriate. It isn't godly. Some would even say it's of the devil.

Let me be as blunt as I can. Maybe you've been influenced by that mindset. You've listened to some people teach and you've gotten that idea in your own mind. Let me be as direct as I can. Scripture nowhere says or implies that God forbids the use of any music style in worship. In fact, the style of music that a church uses is an issue of conscience. It's not directly addressed in the Scripture. So, it's an issue of conscience.

Whose conscience? The collective conscience of the elders of that church. They're the ones who give an account. They're the ones who decide the music style that will characterize a given church.

But, sadly, this issue of music style is especially divisive in the church today between those who embrace contemporary music and those who enjoy more traditional. Now, as you know, there have been three basic responses to this ongoing conflict.

One response of some churches is to choose to use only one style of music. We're going to be all contemporary. We're going to be all traditional. For example, the Harvest churches that said we're going to be all contemporary. We don't want any older stuff included. Other churches make different decisions.

A second approach some have taken is to have two separate services - a contemporary service and a traditional service. Now, I think that's well-intentioned, but it's a bad idea because it doesn't produce unity. It produces further division, often generationally. It doesn't bring the church together. It separates the church. It doesn't produce mutual understanding and unity.

So, at Countryside, we've chosen the third solution. And that is, we have intentionally included a mix of traditional and contemporary music. Now, let me hasten to say, we made that choice not because we just wanted to compromise and try to keep everybody happy. We made that choice, as I'll show you shortly, because it reflects the Old Testament and New Testament pattern. So, I'll come back to that, but let's move on to music lyrics.

I talked about music styles. There isn't a style that's dictated in Scripture. It's an issue of conscience. But what about music lyrics? Well, in Ephesians 5:19, Paul identifies three types or kinds of lyrics that are acceptable in the worship of God. Look at it again: "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." Now, Paul uses those same three categories in Colossians 3:16, and those three expressions in Greek are the most common Greek words for the religious songs in the Septuagint, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Testament that was done a couple of 100 years before Christ. It was used by the Apostles. In fact, these three expressions often appear in the Septuagint - used interchangeably in the titles of the Psalms. So, we shouldn't make any sharp distinction between them.

However, there are nuances of difference in their meaning. Let's see if we can understand those nuances. The first type of lyrics we're told here are psalms. The Greek word is *psalmos*. So, our English word is not a translation but a transliteration of the Greek word. The Greek word *psalmos* originally meant "to pluck the string of a bow" or sometimes it referred to the sound of a stringed instrument. The way the Septuagint uses this word, it's clear that when people sang psalms in the Old Testament, they did so usually with musical accompaniment. That's the essence of this word. In the New Testament, *psalmos* occurs seven times. Five times, it clearly refers to the book of Psalms quoting psalms. The other two times are here in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. So, the word Psalms refers primarily to the Old Testament book of Psalms, but it can also refer to later songs that use the poetry of the Psalms or that use the Psalms as a pattern for music. It's clear from Paul's admonition here that we ought to include the Psalms themselves in our worship and the truths taught in the Psalms should inform and serve as a basis for the other songs we write and sing. I'm involved right now - a friend of mine is working on a Psalter project, a modern Psalter project, and I've had the opportunity to write several psalms, songs based on several Psalms that may go in that Psalter. That's a biblical concept. We need to sing the Psalms.

A second type of lyrics listed here are hymns. Again, our English borrows the Greek word which is *hymnos*. *Hymnos*. It refers to poetry recited or sung, most often in praise or honor of a deity. In both the Septuagint and in the New Testament, hymns are songs that set forth the truth about God and are usually addressed to God. Alan Ross writes, "A hymn was more formal, loftier, and more universal in scope, focusing on one or more of the divine attributes and not on personal experiences."

Most scholars agree that the New Testament contains several poems that were probably first century hymns. For example, in Luke 1 you have Mary's Magnificat. It's poetry. That's why it's set off as poetry in our Scriptures. In that same chapter, you have the Benedictus of Zacharias, again, set off as poetry, probably a first century hymn. In Philippians 2 - about Christ's kenosis, His condescension into the incarnation. Colossians 1:15-20. Those are all fragments of first century hymns, and they focus on Christ and on the atonement.

Hymns factored in the people of God in the New Testament. Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn after the Last Supper, and there were hymns on other occasions they would have sung usually every Sabbath as well at the synagogue worship. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were bound in the Philippian jail and they were singing hymns to God. Literally, the Greek text says they were “hymning to God”, not humming, they were hymning to God. The word “hymns” implies that our music should be distinctly God-centered, Christ-centered, and cross-centered.

A third type of lyrics listed here is spiritual songs. The Greek word for songs is the word from which we get our English word ode. It’s a poem intended to be sung. It can be a dirge. That’s what our English word usually means, but most often it speaks of songs of joy and praise. It can also generically refer to singing of any kind, including with musical accompaniment.

Notice Paul adds the adjective “spiritual” to distinguish these songs from secular songs. Let me just say it. It shouldn’t need to be said but let me say it. The Bible knows nothing of God’s people singing secular songs when they come together as a church. Spiritual songs, then, refer to songs that are not the psalms, and they’re not hymns, but they still have a biblically solid spiritual message. Again, Alan Ross in his book on biblical worship writes this: “These are new songs that set forth the believers’ spiritual enjoyment of life under God.” So, those three expressions summarize the variety of music that should fill our minds and the churches hymn book.

Now, from those three biblical styles or types of lyrics, we can establish two guiding principles. Let me give them to you.

Number 1: the lyrics must be biblically based. The lyrics of our songs are to be full of rich, biblical truth. That’s certainly true of the music recorded in Scripture and our lyrics are to follow suit. They should be biblically accurate, and the truth should be rich enough that it can’t be expressed in three words or less. The lyrics of God-honoring music have something to say, and they have something to say that patently biblical.

Not only should they be biblically based but, secondly, the lyrics must be biblically balanced, that is, our music should mirror the balance of music in our Bibles. The Spirit-inspired psalms and hymns in Scripture set a pattern for balance in our music, and they do so in several ways. Let me give you what this balance should look like.

First of all, the lyrics should be balanced between Old and New Testament revelation. We believe in progressive revelation, that is, we believe that God has progressively more clearly revealed His truth, all the truth we need to know about the gospel in Genesis 3:16 in one sense. But as Scripture unfolded, we learn so much more about that gospel. And so, as we look at our music, it should be balanced. It should present God not only as the Psalms do often, as Creator-Sustainer and as Savior in a generic sense, the Rescuer from the problems of life and the difficulties and trials we encounter, but as in the New Testament, about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The same balance should be present in our music.

The lyrics of our song, secondly, should be balanced between subjective experience and objective truth. By subjective, I mean having to do with us and our feelings about God and what He's done. By objective, I mean the truth about God and His character, His acts, His words.

It's okay for some of our songs to be the subjective expression of our feelings and thoughts to God. We sing, for example, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that You're my God." That's a personal experience, subjective expression, and that's perfectly fine. We find that same kind of personal expression in biblical music. Psalm 18:1: "I love You, O Lord, my strength."

But much of the music of Scripture rehearses God's objective revelation of Himself to us. You're familiar with that, and our music needs to do the same. We need to balance our worship between the subjective expression of our thoughts to God and the objective revelation of God to us. In other words, for every song about me and my feelings, there should be songs like "Oh Worship the King" and "Holy, Holy, Holy". Of course, some songs do both at the same time like "In Christ Alone" and "Before the Throne of God Above".

Thirdly, the songs recorded in Scripture also teach us a balance between old and contemporary songs. I told you I'd get back to this. Why do we do that? Why do we include a mix of old and new? It's because there's biblical warrant for it.

Think about Old Testament believers. The Psalms were written over a period of 900 years. The oldest Psalm in the Psalter, Psalm 90, written by Moses about 1445 BC. The newest psalms in the Psalter were written 900 years later in the 500s BC. So, over a period of 900 years, the people of God were singing old songs and they were singing new songs as they were written.

But what about the New Testament church? The same thing happened there. This was the pattern there as well. In addition to singing the Psalms, Paul just told us they should sing psalms and hymns. They were also singing contemporary Christological songs in the first century. How do we know that? Because we have fragments of them in the Scripture, in the New Testament.

So, don't miss this crucial point. Old Testament and New Testament believers sang old songs, that were a part of their heritage, and they continued to add contemporary songs during every time period. That was the pattern of Old Testament believers, that was the pattern of the New Testament church, and that is the biblical pattern that we need to follow in music and worship. You need, Christian, to develop a taste for both.

Our music must be biblically based. It must be biblically balanced. There can and should be great variety in our music. But when a person is filled by the Spirit with the Word, there's going to be a deep and abiding love for God-centered, Christ-centered, cross-centered music.

Now, if you have to admit that that love is not as strong as it should be, let me just give you a few practical suggestions for how to promote and develop that love for God-centered music in your own soul. Let me just say these are not inspired. You won't find a chapter and verse for these. I hope they'll be helpful. They're just some ideas, some practical means to develop this appetite and taste.

Number one: memorize the lyrics of the songs we sing as a church and other songs that are rich in biblical truth so that you can sing them. You need to memorize psalms so that you can turn them into an expression of praise. Do it intentionally. As we're singing, try to look away and sing some from memory so that you're incorporating those words into your mind so that you can sing them. That's such a rich thing to do. If you pull up beside me at a stoplight sometime, you'll look over and you might think, "What's wrong with Tom? What's he doing?" I'm singing. I love to sing. And I sing out because that's what God is worthy of. That's what - He's worthy of our worship and praise. And memorizing music helps me do that. I don't always have to have my sound system on to sing. Why? Because I've memorized the songs. I know them.

Last night, I was walking - this week I've been going through Psalm 104, the great Psalm about God as Creator. And as I was walking last night, I was looking out and seeing the creation of God and I found my mind going to both the old and the new versions of "All Creatures of our God and King" - "Lift up your voice and with us sing". Hallelujah! Praise Yahweh as the Creator-God. Memorize music so that you can sing.

Number two: fill your life with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Now, some of you are not as prone to love music. Let me just admonish you. You're going to have to make room for music in your life. What that means is you're going to have to turn off the news. You don't need to know more about how bad the world is. Turn off talk radio, politics, sports talk and fill your mind with good, biblically solid lyrics. Now, don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying you can't do any of those things. I'm just saying, intentionally fill your life with the right kind of music. If you're one who loves music and your life is like a soundtrack, but your music choices are almost exclusively secular, understand this, music is a gift for you to enjoy, but you are using one of God's best gifts contrary to His primary design, and that's music that's God-centered, Christ-centered, cross-centered. Develop a taste for good Christian songs.

By the way, to help us with that, Seth is putting together a playlist that we can just connect to all the songs we sing in our church. So, you can, like me, you know, he sings a new song, we learn a new song, and I've got to go find it and I've got to load it onto my devices. Well, he's going to

make that easy for us. From now on, we're going to have that playlist so that we can rehearse those songs, we can learn them.

Number three: try to develop a taste for good lyrics in musical styles outside your current preferences. Look, scientists tell us that music is like a language. You know, when you were growing up, you learned to speak English. Well, some of us learned to speak English. I grew up in South Alabama, so it was kind of English. But you learned a language. You learned a language and that becomes the language you easily know and speak, and it's more difficult to access other languages. Music, they've discovered, is like a language. Whatever music you grew up with, it's like you've learned that language of music, and it's hard for you to understand other languages of music.

You know, when you hear older people say, "I don't even understand what they're saying", it's because they don't, because it's a different language than they grew up with. And by the way, those of you who are younger, who are smirking right now, you're going to be the same way someday. You know, your kids are going to go, "How can you not understand that?" It's a language, so develop a taste for other languages and music if they're good quality lyrics.

Number four: try singing together as a family. Get you a hymn - buy you a hymn book. Don't steal one from the church here, please. I don't want you to afflict your conscience but buy one or go online and download the lyrics onto your device. There are lots of places you can do that. But, occasionally, sing with your family.

Number five. This is really important. Always sing along as you listen to Christian music. Don't get into the habit of being a spectator when it comes to praising God. Don't let somebody else do it for you. Engage your own heart and mind. Sing with Christian music. You need to be praising and singing to God.

Number six: when you're enjoying music, if it's secular or Christian, thank God for this gift. I agree with Martin Luther. Next to the Word of God, music is God's greatest gift to us.

Number seven: if you don't love worship music, study the passages we've examined together and we'll examine next week, and the priority that God has given to this. And ask the Holy Spirit to grant you illumination, that you can see how important music is to God and to God's people, and that He would cause you to grow in a love for music that exalts Him. Ask God, the Holy Spirit, to implant that desire in your heart as you invest yourself in understanding what the Scriptures teach. We were made to worship in music. This is just practice. We will do it forever around the throne of God.