

Sermons
The Legacy of Music in Worship (Part 3)
Selected Scriptures
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What we're considering this summer, as we've stepped away from our study of the book of 1 John - Lord willing we'll come back to it with the fall, and I'm looking forward to that and being back in Revelation on Sunday evenings as we begin September. But we're considering, this summer, the legacy of both knowledge and practice that was handed down to the church by previous generations but that, sadly, tragically, the Christian church has lost over the last 150 years or so.

I've likened it to when the Library of Alexandria was destroyed (the ancient library) and the world lost thousands of years of knowledge. Tragically, that same thing has happened to the church of Jesus Christ over the last 100 to 150 years by negligence, by carelessness, and sometimes deliberately and intentionally abandoning that legacy for some promised new idea, new philosophy, new approach that never delivers. So, we're looking at what are some of the elements, not all of them certainly, but what are some of the elements of that legacy that have been lost to the church of Christ?

And we started by looking at the legacy of expository preaching, the fact that that has been largely abandoned in our day, and yet that is a legacy that goes all the way back to Moses, and we traced it through the Scriptures and, of course, through church history.

Over the last couple of weeks, we've been examining another of those lost legacies, and that is the legacy of music in worship. Now, I don't mean that there isn't music in many professing Christian churches today, but I mean what the Scriptures teach about music, its place, how it's to be done, in what spirit, with what attitude, and by whom. All of those things have, sadly, tragically, largely been lost. Scripture provides us, as we've been learning, several essential insights into this issue of music in worship.

Let me just remind you of where we've been so far. We've looked at a biblical critique of music in worship. What are the problems today? And then, in the points that follow, we've been seeing the Scripture address those issues. We looked at a biblical history of music, the biblical priority of music in worship.

Last week, we looked at the biblical purposes of music in worship. There's a personal purpose to remember the truth. There is a horizontal purpose to teach one another and admonish one another, as Paul puts it. And there is a vertical purpose, of course, to worship God, to express our praise to Him. We also considered, last week, the biblical types of music in worship.

Let me just remind you that we considered the issue of music styles. This is where a lot of the culture wars happen in the church today. And let me just tell you what we concluded again. Scripture nowhere says or implies that God forbids the use of any music style in worship. In fact, the style of music in a church, that it uses in worship, is an issue of conscience, that is, the collective conscience of the elders of that church. Just as you make decisions individually and, if you're head of a home, you make decisions on issues of conscience in your home. The same thing is true in each church. The elders of that church are responsible for those things the Scripture doesn't directly address to make those decisions, and we have done that here.

We considered, also, music lyrics. In Ephesians 5:19, Paul identifies three types of lyrics acceptable in worship - Psalms, referring primarily to the Old Testament Psalter and to the later songs that arise directly out of its poetry or that used the psalms as a kind of pattern, hymns - those are songs that set forth truths about God and that are usually addressed directly to God, and then spiritual songs - these are neither psalms nor hymns, but still have a biblically solid, spiritual message, and they are appropriate to be sung in the worship of God.

Now, we discovered from those three biblical types of lyrics, that the lyrics of our songs must be biblically based, and they must be biblically balanced. We looked at that in detail. They must be balanced between Old and New Testament revelation, between our subjective feelings and response to the truth and the objective revelation of God, and between old songs that are part of the legacy that have been handed down to us and new contemporary songs.

And we discovered that those realities are not based on the elders of this church and our own wisdom. They're not based on our, you know, decision to try to keep everybody happy. Instead, it's based on the Scripture. We saw that these concepts were true in the Old Testament and the New Testament, that the people of God sang old songs that had been handed down, and they were also writing and singing new songs in the New Testament era as well. So, that's what we have tried to do in in our church.

Now, that's where we've been. Today, I want us to finish our study of this issue of music, considering two additional insights. But let's begin with this one: the biblical elements of music in worship, the biblical elements of music in worship. You see, God not only commands that music be part of worship, but He prescribed resources that enrich and support that worship in music - resources like musical instruments, orchestras, choirs, music directors. And, as we will discover, the use of these resources in worship is set forth explicitly in the Old Testament and they are affirmed, as I'll show you, in the New Testament.

So, let's look first at the Old Testament pattern, the Old Testament pattern of music in worship. Let's see how the people of God, in the Old Testament, worshipped God when it came to music. Let's begin by looking at the elements of that music or the musical components. What exactly were those contributing components to their worship in music?

First of all, there were musical instruments. In the Old Testament, it's clear that the people of God used musical instruments to worship God in their singing and in their music. Now, I'm sure that it predated this, but the first biblical record of instruments being used in worship is in Exodus 15:20. It's after the defeat of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea. It says, "Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing." And it goes on to say that Miriam and the women played the timbrel (that's like a handheld drum) as they sang the song of Moses and Israel, and they celebrated God's defeat of the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea.

Instruments were used from that time forward, but it was really primarily under the influence and direction of David that instruments became an integral part of corporate worship, that is, specifically of Tabernacle worship. You remember, David didn't build the temple. They were still using the Tabernacle, the tent. And the temple would come under his son Solomon. But in Tabernacle worship, instruments played a huge part.

David, of course, was a musician himself. He played, he sang, he wrote songs. He also, and this may surprise you, invented several musical instruments. 1 Chronicles 23:5 refers to the instruments which David made for giving praise. 2 Chronicles 7:6 speaks of "the instruments of music to the Lord, which King David had made for giving praise to the Lord".

But David went beyond this. You remember that the Levites had been set apart by God's law to service the Tabernacle. At the time of David, there were 38,000 Levites, descendants of Levi. David assigned 4000 of them to be responsible for the music at the Tabernacle and, later, that continued at the temple his son, Solomon, built. Now, most of the four thousand were instrumentalists. 1 Chronicles 15:16: "Then 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 sounds of joy."

Turn back with me to 1 Chronicles. Look at 1 Chronicles 23. We're going to see several things here in chapter 23 and then in chapter 25, so you can keep your finger here. 1 Chronicles 23. You'll notice verse 5. It says that, of the Levites, 4000 were appointed to be "praising the Lord with the instruments which David made for giving praise." Now, when were they responsible to play and to use their instruments? Well, go down to verses 30 and 31: "They are to stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord, and likewise at evening, and to offer all burnt offerings to the Lord..." Now, what this is saying is that daily, at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, these instrumentalists were to play, and the singers were to sing. In addition to everyday, verse 31 goes on to say, "on the sabbaths [so every seventh day], the new moons [that's the celebrations that came monthly] and the fixed festivals in the number set by the ordinance concerning them..."

You say, “Wow, that sounds like all the time!” Well, look at the end of verse 31: “continually before the Lord”. That’s exactly how worship and music was to be led by these musicians. They were to lead in worship at the Tabernacle and later at the temple, every morning, every evening, every Sabbath, and every special feast day. They didn’t all serve at once, but these chapters tell us that they served on a kind of rotating basis, like the priests did as well.

Now, what instruments did they use? Well, I don’t think I need to argue this with you, but if you read 1 and 2 Chronicles, you’ll discover they used instruments from all of the categories of instruments. In terms of brass and wind, instruments are named trumpet, the ram’s horn, the flute, and the pipe. When it comes to strings, you see the lyre, the harp, the ten-strings, and the lute - all stringed instruments. Percussion - cymbals and different kinds of cymbals and sizes for different parts of the music and different ways to play, and timbrels. Timbrels, as I said before, were small drums.

By the way, let me just say that all of those instruments I just named, weren’t special worship instruments. They were the musical instruments of ancient Israel. The same instruments were used to accompany both secular and worship music. Let me just make a point of application because some of you were raised in a setting where you thought there was a certain kind of instrument that was appropriate for worship, and a certain kind that wasn’t. Let me just say, directly, there may be specific instruments you like and there may be some instruments you don’t like, but biblically there are no instruments off limits in the worship of God. Trumpets and timpanis, violins and violas, mouth harps and marimbas, drums, guitars, and organs are all acceptable. So, get it out of your mind that there’s any kind of musical instrument that’s forbidden or is somehow second class in the worship of God.

What we’re talking about here with these instruments, when you look at all of those categories, we’re talking about what we would call an orchestra. That’s really what’s described here. So, an orchestra was involved in the worship of God’s people.

In addition, worship was also led, in the Old Testament pattern, by choirs and vocalists. Choirs and vocalists. They were set apart from the congregation to lead in singing and this was a

prescribed part of Israel's worship. Of those 4000 Levite musicians that David set apart, 288 of them constituted a huge choir. Look at 1 Chronicles 25, 1 Chronicles 25:6: "All these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, 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.

Now, this choir that sang was composed of both men and women. Verse 5 says that Heman's 14 sons and 3 daughters were involved. That tells us that there were both men and women. In addition, in Ezra 2:65, much later in Israel's history - there, the choir was composed of 200 male and female singers.

Jewish historians tell us that no service of worship was celebrated in the temple without a minimum of 12 singers and 12 instrumentalists. There were choirs. There was a huge choir of almost 300 singers that sang regularly in the corporate worship of God's people.

Now, let me just stop and say, right now, in our contemporary evangelical culture, the larger Christian culture, choirs are out. I get that. That's true. But understand this, there have been choirs in worship for more than 3000 years. In addition to that, even today, there are lots of choirs outside of churches. There's a choir in almost every school in our country. Choirs are not going to go away. I promise you, they'll be back and we'll be cool again. Actually, we don't care whether we're cool. But I'm telling you that there have always been, in the corporate worship of God's people, a collection of voices trained to lead in worship, and that's never going to change.

Everywhere there are orchestras and there are choirs, as there were in the Old Testament people of God, there will also be, as there were then, music and choir directors. God appointed music directors and choir directors to lead the musical element of the corporate worship. At the return of the ark of the covenant, Chenaniah was the leader of the singing. Look back at chapter 15, 1 Chronicles 15:22. You see his job and his qualifications. "Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was in charge of the singing; [there's his job description and] he gave instruction in singing [and

here's his qualification] because he was skillful." He had the necessary skills, musically, to accomplish this feat.

Now, these things are unfolding in the time of David, around 1000 years before our Lord - 1000 BC. Let's fast-forward to the end of Old Testament history. Turn to Nehemiah. This is 600 years after David, 400 years before our Lord, the end of Old Testament history, and you'll see the same thing is happening. Nehemiah 12 and the second half of verse 42: "And the singers sang, with Jezrahiah their leader..." And go down to verse 46: "For in the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times [600 years earlier], there were leaders of the singers, songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving to God." So, in Nehemiah's time, 600 years after David, they recognize that these things had been neglected among the people of God, and they reinstitute the worship and music the same way that it had been under David and his direction. So, whether you look at the time of David or you go 600 years farther along, you find that there were choirs and there was a music director, a music leader. Fifty-five of the Psalms begin with the phrase "For the choir director". And so, there was an orchestra, there was a choir, and there was a music or choir director.

But it wasn't just the choir director and the choir who sang. They were all there for another purpose. Another key element of the worship of God in music was congregational singing. There were a variety of musical instruments, there were vocalists, there was a choir, there was a music director. But understand, that those things were not David's idea. David didn't say, "Look, I'm a musician. I love music. We're going to do this 'cause I like it!" No, it came by divine command. The command for choirs, for instruments, and for a music director - all of these things were from the Lord.

Turn back to 2 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 29. This is later in Israel's history, during the time of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah restores the worship in the temple. You'll notice in verse 25: "He then stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with harps and with lyres [now, watch the rest of this verse], according to the command of David and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for [because - here's why they did it] the command was from the Lord [Yahweh] through His prophets."

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not yet saying that this is commanded today. What I am saying is that this was the Old Testament pattern, and the reason it was the Old Testament pattern, wasn't because David dreamed it up; it was because God commanded it.

Now, why? Why did all of these resources exist? They were all intended to encourage and support the singing of all of God's people. If you're still in 2 Chronicles 29, look at verse 26. As Hezekiah institutes this reformation, verse 26 says, "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; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." So, understand that, while the singers sang, while the choir sang, while the instruments played, the congregation of God's people sang praises to their God. Those are the musical components of Old Testament music and worship. There were instruments, there were choirs, vocalists, music directors, and there was congregational singing.

Now, before we leave the Old Testament pattern, let's briefly consider the musicians' requirements. In the Old Testament, to lead God's people in corporate worship and music, those participating had to meet some qualifications. And these may not be all of them, but these are certainly the three most prominent and important.

First of all, they had to be true believers. 1 Chronicles 23:5 says that the 4000 Levites, assigned to lead in music and worship, "were praising the Lord [Yahweh]." In other words, they were personally committed to Yahweh as their God, and they were worshiping Him as they played their instruments and as they sang. This really shouldn't even need to be said but let me say it. Unbelieving musicians and vocalists have no place in leading God's people in worship, regardless of how professional or skilled they might be. On those few occasions each year when we bring in outside musicians to expand our orchestra, Seth and I are in full agreement, as are the elders, they must be Christians as best we can know, because they're helping lead God's people in worship. So, they had to be true believers.

Secondly, they had to have skill and regular practice. Sadly, music is not always done well. Even secularly, that's true. I remember the famous quote by last generation's Chuck Berry, who was commenting on the poor musical quality of most pop music. He said, "Three great chords, eighteen great albums, and a lot of it wasn't done well." That should never be true of the music we use for worship. One of the key points the Old Testament stresses about music and worship is excellence. 1 Chronicles 15:22: "Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was in charge of the singing; he gave instruction in singing because he was skillful." He himself was skilled and he instructed others so that they could do it and do it well. 1 Chronicles 25:7: "Their number who were trained in singing to the Lord, with their relatives, all who were skillful, was 288." 2 Chronicles 34:12: "...all who were skillful with musical instruments."

It's interesting. The Jewish Mishnah says that choir members, for the temple choir, had a five-year training period before they were allowed to sing in the actual choir. Five years of preparation. Well, we don't insist on that. But let me put it very clearly and bluntly. Musicians that are unprepared and music that is done poorly, because of a lack of diligence, doesn't honor Christ and it distracts from true worship. Psalm 33:3 says, "Play skillfully with a shout of joy." "Play skillfully" implies that you have the inherent ability, that you have worked to develop that skill and ability, and that you consistently rehearse and practice so that you're ready to do what God has gifted and called you to do.

So, in the Old Testament, the musicians' requirements: they had to be true believers, they had to have skill and regular practice, and, thirdly, they had to be engaged in intentional worship. 1 Chronicles 23:5, again, says the 4000 Levites assigned to lead in music and worship "were praising the Lord". You see, regardless of the style of music - and I've seen this violated with both traditional and even classical kinds of music, as well as contemporary music - regardless of the style of music, the actual presentation of the vocalists and the musicians is very important. Pretentious performances, calculated to garner the praise of the audience, distract from the ultimate purpose of the music, which is the glory of God.

Paul understood this, even in his preaching. In his preaching, Paul deliberately chose not to speak with cleverness of speech, as he called it in 1 Corinthians 1:17. He had acquired some skills in classical rhetoric. But he said I'm not going to use those in my ministry to God's people. In the same way, musicians involved in leading worship have a responsibility to reject the performance mindset often acquired in their training. The goal of the musicians involved in leading in worship must always be the natural, undistracting excellence that draws the listeners' attention to the Lord and to His truth.

So, there is the Old Testament pattern of music and worship. It included musical instruments, choirs, vocalists, music directors, and congregational singing. And it was all done by believers who were skilled and rehearsed and committed to leading God's people in genuine and real worship.

But that brings us to the really important question. Is the Old Testament pattern, that we have just studied together, supposed to be the pattern for the New Testament church? So, let's consider, for a few moments, the arguments for those Old Testament elements being part of the worship of the New Testament church.

You see, let's admit that there are some, even some that we respect, who look at the New Testament record and conclude that the New Testament church shouldn't use those resources. They shouldn't use instruments. They shouldn't use choirs and worship. John Calvin, for example, advocated singing only the biblical Psalms without instruments. Here's what he wrote. Here's what he wrote. He said, "Musical instruments were among the legal ceremonies which Christ, at His coming, abolished and, therefore, we under the gospel must maintain a greater simplicity." In other words, he's saying those elements, like choirs, music directors, instruments, are all part of the ceremonial aspects of God's law, just like the priests and the sacrifices, and should not be a part of our worship. The Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, argued that all music should be excluded from corporate worship. Calvin's argument, as I said, was that the instruments and choirs were allowed in Old Testament Israel, they were part of the ceremonial law, but since instruments are not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, under the

regulative principle that we looked at a couple of weeks ago, they must be excluded from worship.

Is that true? Well, I certainly respect Calvin. But I think there are several compelling biblical arguments for using the Old Testament elements (such as instruments, choirs, and vocalists) in the New Testament worship of the church. These aren't all the arguments, but let me give you the three that, just for me, seal the deal.

Number one: the New Testament does not repeal the Old Testament divine commands regarding music and worship. Remember, God prescribed the use of instruments, choirs, and music directors in the Old Testament, and no New Testament text forbids the use of those things in worship. Now, before you argue with me, let me add to that. Nowhere does the New Testament connect these things we're talking about regarding music to the ceremonial law, like it clearly does with sacrifices, priests, feasts, and even the Sabbath. So, the use of instruments in worship is not like the ceremonial laws. Those things are explicitly set aside in the New Testament. On the other hand, these things are clearly commanded by God and are not set aside by the New Testament.

There's a second argument for using musical instruments in corporate worship, and that is, the New Testament command to sing psalms has within it an implied approval of musical instruments. You would agree that, in the New Testament, God commands the New Testament church to sing psalms - Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16. And the Psalms prescribe the use of instruments in worship. They do so in several ways. They do so in the titles of the Psalms. Now, let me just say the titles of the Psalms in our Bible - those are ancient. They're in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was done 200 years before Christ. So, these titles existed 200 years before Christ and the translators struggle with some of the terms. So, some of the words were old enough that the translator didn't know what they meant. And so, they were very old. In fact, the Jewish people considered the titles part of the canon of Scripture and included them in the body of the Hebrew text. They're even numbered as a verse, which makes it really difficult for Hebrew students in seminary. But our Lord and the Apostles considered the titles authoritative and built biblical and theological arguments on them.

Now, when you understand all of that, it's compelling that many of the Psalm titles call for the inspired Psalms to be sung with musical accompaniment. Look at Psalm 4 for example. Psalm 4: "For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David." Psalm 5: "For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David." Psalm 6: "For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-string lyre. A Psalm of David." And so forth. By the way, 55 of the Psalms are addressed to the choir director, which means they were to be sung in corporate worship under the direction of a choir director, with a choir. I think that sanctions the use of choir and music directors as well.

The Psalms also prescribed, not only in the use of instruments in music, not only in their titles, but also in the content of the Psalms themselves. For example, Psalm 33:2: "Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him..." And, by the way, "Sing praises to Him", in the Septuagint, the word used is *psalló*. And in Ephesians 5:19 that same word is translated "make melody". "Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings." Psalm 98:5-6: "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."

Turn to Psalm 92. Psalm 92:1: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness [steadfast love] in the morning and Your faithfulness by night, with the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, with resounding music upon the lyre." Now, notice that all of that is said - look back at the title of this Psalm, "A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day." This was to be done on the Jewish Sabbath. They were to sing with instruments. This was part of what's included in the content of the songs.

But not only do we see this in the titles of the Psalms and in the content of the Psalms, but the word "Psalms" itself teaches us this. Both the Hebrew word for Psalms, in the Old Testament, and the Greek word in the Septuagint and the New Testament can mean "to sing accompanied by strings". So, the very command to sing Psalms is at least permission, and perhaps a command, to use musical instruments. Harold Hoehner, whose magisterial work on the book of Ephesians is a great resource in the study of this letter (Ephesian letter), writes this, "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 fact, turn to Ephesians 5, because what Paul says here is most interesting. Ephesians 5, and look at verse 19. We’ve pulled a lot from this verse, but there’s more here. Notice, the verse begins, verse 19, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...”

Obviously, to speak is to use the human voice, but he means speaking specifically, notice the next word, “singing”. The Greek word for “singing” is the normal word for using the human voice in music. But then he adds, “and making melody”. Now, why include both singing and making melody if they mean exactly the same thing? It’s possible that he did that on purpose. But the truth is, there’s a nuance of difference between these words. Singing refers to producing music with the human voice. Making melody is literally “psalming”. The word can and often does mean to pluck a stringed instrument. By using both of these words here, it’s very possible, I think likely, that Paul was referring to singing and the use of instruments.

But there’s a third argument for the use of instruments in worship that I think seals the deal for me, and it’s this: the practice of heaven is to use musical instruments in worship. In heaven, the church worships God with singing accompanied by instruments. Revelation 5:8-9, “the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders”, as we’re studying Revelation, we’ve learned they represent the church. They “fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp... And they sang a new song...” Now, if the use of instruments was in fact part of the ceremonial law that was fulfilled with the coming of Christ, why in the world are they duplicating that around the throne of God, and we will do that forever? That makes no sense. While I respect those like Calvin and others who’ve come to different conclusions, I simply cannot agree with them. To me and to the other elders of this church, the biblical evidence is completely overwhelming that it is acceptable, not only to use the human voice, but all kinds of musical instruments that exist to praise God.

Martin Luther, in 1541, presented a Bible to an organist, a man named Wolff Heinz. And in the front of that Bible, Luther wrote “Psalm 149” and then he wrote these words, “The stringed instruments of the Psalms are to help in the singing of this new song [that is, the song about the

gospel]: and Wolff Heinz and all pious Christian musicians should let their singing and playing to the praise of the Father of all grace sound forth with joy from their organs... and whatever other beloved [musical] instruments there are (recently invented and given by God), of which neither David nor Solomon, neither Persia, Greece, nor Rome, knew anything. Amen!” He’s exactly right. That is what the Bible teaches.

So, those are the resources that are available to us in the corporate worship and music. There’s one final insight, a seventh insight Scripture gives us. I want us to consider very briefly, and that is, the biblical attitudes for music and worship. I’ve touched on these, but I want to come back and focus on them. There are two primary heart attitudes that we should have in music and worship, together and individually.

First, sing and play with your heart. Look at Ephesians 5:19 again: “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart...” With your heart. That prepositional phrase explains how we’re to sing and how we’re to play. Your heart is your entire inner self, your immaterial being. That means a couple of things. That means that worship and music should not be halfhearted. It should be wholehearted with energy, with enthusiasm. You know, that’s a pet peeve of mine and I’ve already addressed it. Listen. Sing out to God.

But the fact that it’s to be with your heart also means something else very important, and that is, it shouldn’t be merely external. It should be internal. It should be genuine; it should be sincere. Colossians 3:16: “singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Our music should be with our hearts and from our hearts. As I mentioned last week, as Jesus taught the Samaritan woman, our worship, including our worship and music, must be in spirit, that is, with our spirits - must be internal, authentic, passionate, active. That means you’re not just moving your lips; it means your heart is engaged and participating.

In fact, singing that is not from our hearts, accompanied by a heart that’s truly obedient to Christ and shows that in our lives, that kind of singing disgusts God. Turn back to the prophet Amos. Amos makes this so clear in a passage that’s a famous passage, but often taken out of context.

Amos 5:21. God, speaking to Israel, and He says, "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings." He's saying, "*Listen, I know you're coming to do what I commanded you. You say you're here to worship. Your body showing up, but your heart isn't.*" Verse 23: "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps." He's saying, "*Listen, your body is there, but your heart is not engaged and your life is not a life of obedience and worship.*" Instead, verse 24: "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." He's saying, "*Let your life and how you live reflect the heart of worship so that when you come to worship Me, it's not just your body that shows up, it's your heart that shows up.*"

When we sing, we're to be sincere, authentic. We must really mean what we're singing to God. And we certainly shouldn't just be standing there not singing at all. Listen, if you're a Christian, if you're a follower of Christ, you have the Holy Spirit. He's given you, according with Ephesians 5, a love for God-centered music. He's excited you to sing. You want to express your praise to God, and it's a command.

As I've said, some people say to me, "Well, Tom, you don't understand. I can't sing." Listen, neither can most pop musicians. But look how far it's taken them. No, seriously, I get it, you know. And let me just say, if you're one of those very few people who seriously cannot carry a tune, even if you had a bucket, then sing out wholeheartedly, just quietly, so you don't distract the people around you. But that's not true of most people. If you can sing, sing out loudly, not so your neighbor hears you alone, although there is that horizontal aspect of worship, but so God is pleased that you're singing with your whole heart.

There's one other attitude. Not only are we to sing with our hearts, sing and play to our Lord, to our Lord. Look again at Ephesians 5:19: "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord..." The Greek word for "Lord" is *kurios*. Every time it's used in the book of Ephesians, it refers to Jesus Christ. As we sing and as we play, we must intentionally direct our worship to our Lord, just as if He were standing among us.

You know what that means? When we start to sing a song - I have to do this. I do this all the time. When we start to sing a song, tell yourself in your brain, "I need to sing this as to Christ Himself." And then when your mind wanders during the song (and it will), bring it back. Remind yourself you're singing to the Lord. You're focusing your heart on Him. Our Lord Himself must be central in our worship. Worship and music must be a priority for every one of us because God commands it and it's to be offered from our hearts to the Father and to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Folks, music existed before the creation of the world. The angels sang at the creation. And, as I've shared with you, I believe it's very possible that music wasn't created, but it is an eternal expression of the heart of God.

Music is to be the preoccupation of our lives here, it's to be part of our worship individually and corporately, and music will be in heaven. So, learn now! Practice now! You will be singing to the Lord, with your heart, to the Lord for all eternity. That's what we are called to do. This is the heart of our worship. It's the Word of God and it's taking the Word of God and turning it in to songs addressed to God.

May God make us individually and corporately a people who love God-centered music.