

Sing to One Another
Ephesians 5:15-20

instead of regular songs."

An old farmer went to the city one weekend and attended the big city church where his nephew attended. He came home and his wife asked him how it was.

"Hymns?" asked his mother. "What are those?"

"Well," said the farmer, "it was good. They did something different, however. They sang praise choruses instead of hymns."

"Oh, they're OK. They are sort of like regular songs, only different," said the young man.

"Praise choruses?" said his wife. "What are those?"

"Well, what's the difference?" asked his mother.

"Oh, they're OK. They are sort of like hymns, only different," said the farmer.

The young man said, "Well, it's like this - If I were to say to you: 'Martha, the cows are in the corn' - well, that would be a regular song. If on the other hand, I were to say to you:

"Well, what's the difference?" asked his wife.

'Oh Martha, dear Martha, hear thou my cry
Inclined thine ear to the words of my mouth
Turn thou thy whole wondrous ear by and by
To the righteous, inimitable, glorious truth.

The farmer said, "Well, it's like this - If I were to say to you: "Martha, the cows are in the corn" - well, that would be a hymn. If on the other hand, I were to say to you:

For the way of the animals who can explain
There in their heads is no shadow of sense
Hearkenest they in God's sun or His rain
Unless from the mild, tempting corn they are fenced.

'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, COWS, COWS
are in the corn, are in the corn,
are in the corn, are in the corn,
the CORN, CORN, CORN.'

Yea those cows in glad bovine, rebellious delight
Have broke free their shackles, their warm pens
eschewed
Then goaded by minions of darkness and night
They all my mild Chilliwack sweet corn have
chewed.

Then, if I were to repeat the whole thing two or three times, well, that would be a praise chorus."

So look to the bright shining day by and by
Where all foul corruptions of earth are reborn
Where no vicious animals make my soul cry
And I no longer see those foul cows in the corn.'

The next weekend, the nephew came to visit his uncle and attended the local church of their small town. He went home and his mother asked him how it was.

Then if I were to do all the verses and do a key change on the last verse, well that would be a hymn."

"Well," said the young man, "it was good. They did something different however. They sang hymns

Our passage today tells us to sing to one another. For context, let's read from Ephesians 5:15-20.

You may or may not be a singer. You may sing with the grace and poise of an angel. You may think your singing sounds more like the grinding of gears on a manual transmission or the squeak of an old rusty door. It doesn't matter how you sound, we have a command to sing to one another. It does not matter if you can carry a tune or not, what matters, as we will see, is that as we sing to one another, the song comes from the Spirit with a heart that sings to the Lord. I'd like to share from our passage these three points:

Our singing comes from the Comforter
 Our singing continues with the Congregation
 Our singing cheerfully glorifies Christ

I. OUR SINGING COMES FROM THE COMFORTER – v. 18

In this passage Paul is giving some general guidelines on godly living.

In verse 15 we are told to be wise how we walk in this world with its pull away from godly living.

In verse 16 we are told to make the most of every opportunity. Take every opportunity possible to serve the Lord because the days are evil. It is so easy to get caught up in the narcissistic culture in which we live, so be careful and take advantage of opportunities that will point others to Christ.

In verse 17 we are told not to be foolish but understand what God's will is. What is His will? It's found in verse 18 and is the key to godly living. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit is not some frenzied experience where all of a sudden we go into some trance like mysterious state of unconsciousness.

Being filled with the Spirit is not stoically trying to do God's will in our own power. It's not just dutifully going through the motions with lackluster.

Being filled with the Spirit is not the same as being indwelt by the Spirit. They are two different things. His indwelling occurs at the time of salvation and does not and will not change.

Being filled with the Spirit does not occur over a period of time where we gradually receive more of Him as we mature spiritually. At the time of our salvation we possess all of the Spirit. The question or difference between being indwelt with the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit is this: how much does He possess of us? That's the real question.

We are never commanded to be indwelt by the Spirit, but we are commanded here to be filled with the Spirit. His filling is a matter of yielding our will to His, of relinquishing control to Him. It's a matter of submission. In this verse the tense is that "filling" must be a continuous action on our part. It's a daily, moment-by-moment conscious decision to let go and allow Him to guide and totally control us. His filling is a willing submission on our part to Him.

Paul compares this total control to the same effect of someone who is under total control of alcohol. Paul says if we are going to live godly lives don't be drunk on wine. You might expect him to counter that with something like "instead, be sober," but instead he says be filled with the Spirit.

His filling excites us to sing.

His filling equips us to sing.

The world is full of music. Every creature, every culture, every country, and every religious conviction has music and is filled with singing. There are love songs, and sad songs, and angry songs, songs about anything and everything. John MacArthur suggests that the Christian is truly the only group of people who have a reason to sing. It's because of the Spirit in us. He gives us a song to sing.

I have a song I love to sing, since I have been redeemed,
Of my Redeemer, Savior, King, Since I have been redeemed.

Since I have been redeemed,
Since I have been redeemed, I will glory in His name.

Since I have been redeemed,
Since I have been redeemed, I will glory in His name.

Who put that song there? It was the Holy Spirit.

Allistair Begg has written that during worship singing we have to be spiritually alive (dead people don't sing), we have to be spiritually assisted (through the enabling of the Holy Spirit), and we have to be spiritually active (committed to daily walking with the Lord).

Our singing comes from the Comforter.
Then we see in verse 19 our singing continues with the congregation.

II. OUR SINGING CONTINUES WITH THE CONGREGATION – v. 19a

Before I go any further I need you to do something. Okay I need you to do two things. I need you to pray for Elaine. I provide her with the passages for each week's message. She then prayerfully considers songs that fit with that passage and theme. It's not a haphazard let's see what we can pick late on Saturday night. Pray that as she selects music it will honor God and bring us to worship Him. The second thing I want you to do is pray for Randy as he leads that it will be with joyfulness. Over 400 times in Scripture the people of God are commanded to sing. Pray for them..

One pastor wrote this compelling thought "Week after week, we are spiritually renewed, realigned, and sanctified by singing to the Lord and singing to

each other as a body of Christ. Sadly, some of the churches with the newest facilities and most forward-thinking pastors are weakened substantially by lackluster congregational singing. It is an awful witness for outsiders to watch believers so disinterested in singing to their Creator and Redeemer."

Let's be a church known for its singing because it comes from joyful, Spirit filled hearts. There are three things our singing does for one another.

It edifies.

It educates.

It encourages.

Colossians 3:16

Songs instruct and songs correct. They do so when we are filled with the Word of God.

When I served as hospice chaplain I visited an elderly lady who was in her 90's. She loved the old hymns. So I would take a hymnal and we would sing together. She would say to me that any pastor ought to be able to take a hymn and preach a sermon from it. She's right. Hymns are filled with rich theology and great Biblical truth.

So what music is best for the church? What music should be sung? What style should we cater to? We may have our opinion, but I want to suggest today that what should be sung in church is music that comes from a heart that is filled with the Spirit, music or songs that honor God, songs that are based on the Bible, songs that edify one another, that educate us in doctrine and godly principles, songs that encourage one another to grow in faith, encourage one another in tough times. Songs that glorify God, exalt the Son, and honor the Spirit.

When my Mom was going through her last battle with cancer she kept a hymnal or song books on her bed or night stand. She would be lying there one day and the Lord would give her a song and that song would encourage her, build her up, strengthen

her faith. Each day had a different song.

My Mom and Dad loved singing. When my Dad was growing up, they didn't have a radio in the car. How many had a car like that? Some of you might wonder what they did on trips to pass the time. My grandma would take sheet music and the four of them would sing and they would sing parts, they would sing at reunions and family gatherings.

Whenever Mom was puttering around the house doing chores, she was always singing. Sometimes she would sit down at the piano and sing. She would be going about her duties up in the kitchen and she would sing. Why? It came from the Spirit.

Each morning as part of my devotions I read from a book a song and a little story about why or how that song came to be written. We are doing that on Wednesday night as well. Songs are written for a reason and we need to sing them to one another because they meet some deep, felt need that expresses joy or sorrow or praise or devotion. Grab a hymnal and use it for devotions to encourage and be encouraged.

There was a period in church history during the Dark Ages when congregations didn't sing. That was left to the professionals. Some churches are doing that today. There is little congregational singing.

I love music. I love to sing. I love a variety of music, but most of all I love Christian music. As a matter of fact I rarely listen to anything else.

I love the old hymns.

I love some of the contemporary music.

When I'm driving and a song comes on the radio that I really like and I'm alone, I like to crank it up and belt it out. There is something in the words of the song that speaks to me and I just want to shout it out to the Lord. I don't sing it loudly because He can't hear, but because my heart is joyful and I just can't keep it in.

Folks when God blesses don't be timid. When we sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" Don't sing it quietly like you don't want anyone else to hear.

{Quietly} "praise God from whom all blessings flow."
If it's in the heart, let it out - proclaim it - loudly
"PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW."

I hope you love to sing. I hope it isn't just something you do because it's in the order of service. We are to sing to one another. I hope you sing in the car or around the home. Families used to get together and have singspirations. That doesn't happen much anymore. We have relegated singing only during the morning service. We should bring back that practice.

Maybe we should try our hand at writing some hymns or songs. Meditate on a passage and allow the Spirit to guide your thoughts.

Quite a few years ago now during a very dark time in my life I began penning some words. God was working in me and so I began to write down some lyrics, but I never finished it. Here's what I wrote. Maybe you can identify. It could have music.

I was drifting out on the sea of life
Each day filled with heartache, trouble and strife.
Using no compass, not following the Son,
Wandering aimlessly, out on the run.
Living each day out on my own
With feet of clay and a heart of stone.

I felt the void deep in my soul.

I found only One person could make me whole.
I thought I'd find happiness in the joys of earth
Through vanity, pleasure and a life filled with mirth.

I've felt the shame of losing face
But I've experienced the power of God's amazing grace.

Somewhere deep in you there is a song. Something

else the church did was to borrow from familiar tunes of the day. People would know the melody so all they had to learn were the words. Some balked at it because they were tunes from the taverns, but people recognized the tune.

If you grew up in the 50's music was really making some sweeping changes, especially with the onset of Rock and Roll. You may remember some of the songs from American Graffiti. I'm going to admit to you that I was coerced into singing Karaoke one night and the only song I knew was Love Potion #9. I took my troubles up to Madam Ruth,
You know that gypsy with the gold capped tooth,
She's got a pad down on 34th and vine, she sells
those bottles of love potion number nine.

So one day I thought I would rewrite my own lyrics to that tune. Unfortunately I can't find the page with the rest of the lyrics, so this is what I remember.

I took my troubles up to Jesus Christ,
He is the One who gives eternal life.
He's got a place up in heaven just for me,
A place I will live for all eternity.

He told me I was a flop with sin,
I've been this way since my life did begin
And well, that's all I remember.

Looking at our passage, notice the types of music we are to sing to one another.

We begin with singing psalms. As you might expect they come from the Psalms and exalt God, calling attention to His mighty acts or who He is. Your Bible may have headings to chapters that may say to the choir director, a psalm of David. (Ps 139) "As the Deer panteth for the waters so my soul panteth after Thee." Psalm 42:1

One of the CD's I enjoy listening to is a collection of Psalms with an acoustical guitar and sung by John Michael Talbot. Relatively few of you will

know that name. He was known as the traveling troubadour. What you may find interesting is that he is a Catholic monk. Many of his songs are lifted right from the pages of Psalms and set to music.

It has been said that contained within the Psalms are every emotion man has experienced and they are songs to sing during each and every life encounter. Sing Psalms to one another.

The second type of song we are to sing to one another are hymns. These are New Testament songs of praise focusing on the person of Christ, like: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" "Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus" "There is a Redeemer" Sing to one another hymns that lift up Christ.

The third type of song we are to sing to one another is spiritual songs. Spiritual songs seem to point to the idea of spontaneous praise, maybe like the *Hallelujah Chorus* in Handel's Messiah. But notice carefully the qualifying component which is that the song is to be *spiritual*. There are a fair number of songs which may be passed as Christian but they either have bad theology or no theology at all. Many songs in our hymnal have passed the test of time or the test of sound theology if they are newer.

John Phillip writes that spiritual songs "can help us express our resolve to love God more, grieve Him less and serve Him better."

These are the songs to be sung to one another. But here's the point I think Paul is making. It isn't that these are the only types of songs to be sung in a service or to one another, but rather that we are to use a variety of songs so long as they are God centered and Spirit led from a heart resonating with praise. As I said earlier I love to sing. I love to hear others sing. Singing done by others speaks to me at that moment or during a particular time in my life. It could be a hymn or a chorus, something written hundreds of years ago or just last month.

God is using it in my life. There are two songs that are particularly meaningful to me right now. The first is by Chris Tomlin titled *At the Cross*.

There's a place where mercy reigns and never dies
 There's a place where streams of grace flow deep and wide
 Where all the love I've ever found
 Comes like a flood
 Comes flowing down

[Chorus:]
At the cross
At the cross
I surrender my life
I'm in awe of You
I'm in awe of You
Where Your love ran red
and my sin washed white
I owe all to You
I owe all to You Jesus

There's a place where sin and shame are powerless
 Where my heart has peace with God and forgiveness
 Where all the love I've ever found
 Comes like a flood
 Comes flowing down

[Chorus]

Here my hope is found
 Here on holy ground
 Here I bow down
 Here I bow down
 Here arms open wide
 Here You save my life
 Here I bow down
 Here I bow

[Chorus:]

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I have been awakened in the night and that song is on my mind.

The other song is simply titled *Overwhelmed* and written by Big Daddy Weave.
 I see the work of Your Hands

Galaxies spin in a Heavenly dance oh God
 All that You are is so overwhelming
 I hear the sound of Your Voice
 All at once it's a gentle and thundering noise oh God
 All that You are is so overwhelming

I delight myself in You
 Captivated by Your beauty
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You

God, I run into Your arms
 Unashamed because of mercy
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You

I know the power of Your Cross
 Forgiven and free forever You'll be my God
 And all that You've done is so overwhelming

I delight myself in You
 In the Glory of Your Presence
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You

And God I run into Your arms
 Unashamed because of mercy
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You

You are Beautiful, You are Beautiful
 Oh God, there is no one more Beautiful
 You are Beautiful, God you are the most Beautiful

You are Wonderful, You are Wonderful
 Oh God, there is no one more Wonderful
 You are Wonderful, God You are the most Wonderful

You are Glorious, You are Glorious
 Oh God, there is no one more Glorious
 You are Glorious, God you are the most Glorious

I delight myself in You
 In the Glory of Your Presence
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You

And God I run into Your arms
 Unashamed because of mercy
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You
 I'm overwhelmed, I'm overwhelmed by You
 There is no one more Beautiful
 You are the most Beautiful

One style may appeal to some, another style appeals to others. The point is that songs and styles should not be divisive, but bring us together. I have been to some churches where the music was so loud it took away from the message of the words. I have been in other churches where the praise team seemed to draw attention to themselves rather than pointing to Christ. Christ is the focus as we sing.

Singing to one another edifies, educates, and encourages spiritual growth and mutual adoration of Christ. The aim is to cheerfully glorify Christ.

III. OUR SINGING CHEERFULLY GLORIFIES CHRIST – v. 19b

Let's never forget that our singing is ultimately about giving praise to the Lord.

Johann Sebastian Bach, perhaps the greatest musician of all time, said that the aim of all music is the glory of God. In his own life and work the great composer and organist sought to live out that aim, frequently initialing his works S.D.G.: Sola Deo Gloria - to the glory of God alone.

Psalms 146:1-2 "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being."

In Psalm 51:14-15 we are told to sing of God's righteousness asking Him to "open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise."

In Psalm 100:1-2 we are to express our praise in song with others. It is to be a united effort. "Shout for joy to the Lord, *all the earth*. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with *joyful songs*. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks

to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."

If we belong to Him, then let's sing to Him a song of praise. Let's join together in song, for He is delighted in our praise.

Revelation speaks of all believers from all ages joining together with all the angels and forever singing a song of praise to Him. It will come from hearts forever filled and overflowing with gratitude for all He has done and all He has given to us. We are told that we will be given a new song to sing.

A song is a way through music that fully expresses our heart. Jesus said that what is in our heart will be what comes out our mouth. Let it be a song that glorifies Christ. Let our song be a sweet aroma to Him. We have much to sing about, so let's not stifle it. He is worthy.

Henry Ironside once said "One reason that the spirituality of the church is at such a low ebb today is because people are so careless about matters of this kind, so ready to drop down from the high and holy state that should characterize those that are filled with the Spirit of God. We cannot all make melody on an instrument. Some of us would never be able to produce any melody if dependent upon an instrument, but every believer's heart is like a harp, and as the Spirit of God breathes over the heart strings, real melody goes up to the ear of God."

Heartfelt singing that comes from the Spirit exalts Christ, it endears us to Christ and it endures throughout eternity.

A choir director asked the soloist if she knew that her Redeemer lives. She said He did. The director then told her to sing it again. This time tell us about it. Let's start today. Sing to one another to Christ.