

# *I Will Build My Church*

## The Purpose and Characteristics of Christ's Church

### 14 The Glory of God and Why We Sing Together in the Church

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May 3, 2020

#### **Ephesians 5:18-20**

**18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,**

**19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;**

**20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;**

#### **Colossians 3:16**

**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

Now this morning is my final Sermon on The Church. Next week, if the Lord is pleased- I will begin a verse-by-verse "journey" through **2Peter**- which I am really looking forward to. But this is the fourteenth Sermon on "*What a Biblical Church Looks Like*", and while I realize that there is so much more I could say- I think we have learned quite a bit. And so, I pray that we all will labor unendingly by the Power of the Holy Spirit- to *become* a Church like we see in the Bible.

Now today I am going to explore something that has amazed me for quite some time: the subject of singing together in the Church. I understand why God wants us to read the Bible; and I get why we should pray and fast and partake of the Lord's Table; and why we should do all of these things- *together*.

But why does God command us to *sing* together? Most of us don't sing well; and so, what is the point of God *expecting* and *demanding* that His people gather together to sing? What value do I bring to others when I sing with them? How can my singing help anybody? As you all know very well-

what I don't possess in musical ability- I make up for with energy and enthusiasm. And I never worry if I am off key or out of time- because I can always just make it up with volume.

But, interestingly enough- I really do love music. I love to sing. And I love to play music as much as I can. Ever since Rhonda and I have been married- we have filled our home with music. But what can I offer to someone else? How does me singing together with you- glorify God and bring edification to my brothers and sisters? And what did Paul mean to say when he wrote this from **Ephesians 5**:

**... do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord**

Now a lot of people in the Charismatic camp teach that being filled with God's Spirit makes you act like your drunk. And so, they justify crazy behavior; and teach that the *weirder* you act- the more spiritual you are. And they justify their position from this very Passage. But that isn't what Paul was teaching at all.

First of all, Paul condemns being drunk here. He said,

**... do not get drunk with wine ...**

... and then he tells us why we are NOT to be drunk with wine:

**... for that is dissipation ...**

Now the Greek word that Paul actually wrote down here (*asotia*; Strongs #810) that was translated as “**dissipation**” has to do with: *having no hope of safety; extravagant; squandering; and prodigality*. So, Paul was agreeing with God and the other 39 writers of the Scriptures that drunkenness is ALWAYS wrong; and it is *a/ways* a sin; and it is *a/ways* bad. And we, who live in a drug intoxicated world can then correctly extrapolate the word, “*drunk*” and substitute words like “*high*” or “*buzz*”.

The point here is that God wants our minds to be clear and thinking and accountable at all times- and not impaired with alcohol or drugs or fantasies. Here's how the Apostle put it to the young Pastor of the Church at Ephesus in **2Timothy 1:7**

**For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.**

... where the word, “**discipline**” has to do with a clear and sound mind. So, being “**sound in mind**” or “**sound in faith**” or to have “**sound Doctrine**” or to be “**level headed**” is the exact *opposite* of “**dissipation**”. So, to suggest that being filled with God’s Spirit makes you to be *unsound*; or *undisciplined*; or *foolish*; or to act like a *drunken man*- is to blaspheme God the Holy Spirit.

No, the context here is the pagan religions that dominated life in Ephesus back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. The Worship services of these pagans were characterized by people going into trances; and of supposedly seeing visions; and having supernatural visitations; and of dancing around lewdly in a daze- like people do when they are drunk.

So, Paul says to the people of Ephesus- *“Don’t copy the pagans. They aren’t saved. There is something infinitely better; something that will actually bring Glory to God; and that will enhance your life in this world as well- and that is for you to be,*

**... filled with the Spirit**

... so, rather than become mere puppets, who are dragged around and made to do silly and unreasonable things like the pagans- being filled with God’s Spirit will open your mind to Divine Truth. Being “filled” will cause you to think biblically; and to ponder the things of God with a clear and sober mind.

But now we need to define what it means to be “filled with God’s Spirit” Most people today define it as like a glass being *filled* with water. And whereas that has *some* truth to it- the BEST way to understand this term, is to think of being *controlled* by God’s Spirit; or being *dominated* by God’s Spirit; or being *led* by God’s Spirit; or being *empowered* by God’s Spirit.

And this term also has the idea of being filled in an *ever- growing* sense. And so, we may be controlled by God’s Spirit to some degree right now- but we can always be controlled *better*. We may be led right now- but we can always be led *more*; or *more often*; or *more fully*.

But to be filled as with water in a glass- has the idea of NOT having any more room. A full glass has no room for anything else. And that gives the wrong and incorrect idea about what it means to be “filled” with God’s Spirit. And it is incorrect thinking like that- that leads to *other* incorrect

Teachings.

For example, many Pentecostal people teach that the Holy Spirit “leaks out of you” unless you speak in tongues every day. And so, the people, who were filled with God’s Spirit in **The Acts 2** allowed the Holy Spirit to leak out of themselves and had to be filled all over again in **The Acts 4**. In other words, Pentecostals teach that the fact that they had to be filled again in **The Acts 4** was bad; it was sin. They never should have allowed the Holy Spirit to leak out of them.

But the Reality is that the fact that the same people, who were “filled” with God’s Spirit in **The Acts 2**- were filled again in **The Acts 4** shows that the people of **The Acts 2**- had grown in Grace and in the knowledge of God; and were *more* led by God’s Spirit; and *more* controlled; and *more* empowered by God the Holy Spirit in **The Acts 4**- which is a *wonderful* thing.

And the Apostle Paul taught that there would be at least two results of the people of the Church NOT being drunk with wine- but being filled with God’s Spirit:

- **speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;**
- **always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;**

Paul says here that one of the results of being filled with God’s Spirit is that we would “**always give thanks for all things**”. And we would give those thanks- “**in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father**”. So, one of the indisputable by-products of being controlled or led or empowered or filled of God the Holy Spirit- is that we “**always give thanks for all things**”. So, being filled with God’s Spirit makes us thankful; or grateful. And that tells us that an *ungrateful* person or a person, who sees no need to give thanks- is one who is NOT filled with God the Holy Spirit.

And this is a very important Issue and one that deserves its own Sermon. But I want to look closely today at the *first* response to being filled with God’s Spirit that Paul gives here- and that is that we will:

**Speak[ing] to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;**

Now why did Paul say that? And, right off “Jump Street”- this is a

Command. So, we are *commanded* to *continually* “speak” to one another- using three different kinds of music:

- Psalms
- Hymns
- Spiritual Songs

Not just Psalms. Not only Hymns. And not only Spiritual Songs. But all three. Now the way that the word, “Speak” is used here in the original Greek- tells me that we are to “address” one another; or “confront” one another; or to “pronounce” to one another. And we are to “address” these three types of music to a special group called, “**one another**”- which has to do with the members of the Church. And that tells me that these three types of music are designed by God as a form of “Edification” and Encouragement to our brothers and sisters. So, us addressing each other with these three kinds of music are used by God to give Hope to one another. And then to the saints at Colosse- this same Apostle wrote:

**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

... here we are told to “**admonish one another**” with this same three types of music. Now the word “admonish” has to do with a Greek word (*noutheteo* Strongs #3560) that has to do with: *to put something important in mind; to caution or to reprove gently*. And it is from this same Greek word that we get the idea of “Christian Counselling”.

And we are told that doing this admonishing in song- is the fruit of “letting” or “allowing” the Word of God to richly dwell within us. So, **Ephesians** tells us that being “filled” with God’s Spirit *empowers* us to address one another with these three types of music and then **Colossians** tells us that by allowing the Word of God to richly dwell within us- we will bear fruit by admonishing one another in these three types of music.

So, this should be a *primary* and an *ongoing* effort by the people of the Church. And my Question is, “*Why?*” *Why* is God determined that we all be musical- at least to some extent? *Why* is this so important to God?

Couldn't I do everything that God wants here *without* singing?  
Couldn't I admonish and edify my brothers and sisters *without* singing?  
Well, evidently not- because this IS in the Bible; and this IS a Command;  
and this IS part of what a Biblical Church looks like.

Now some (not many) New Testament scholars say, "*A Worship Service is NOT a New Testament idea. Believers don't gather for Worship. We gather for Edification.*" But is that true?

And finding good, solid, biblical Answers to Questions like this- has to matter to us. So, to understand why this is so important to God- we must try to comprehend what connection our singing has with the Glory of God. And we have our work cut out for us- because of some problems with the terms and words that we use. For example:

- Who is God?
- What do I mean by "the Glory of God"?
- What does it mean for us to "glorify God"?
- What is "Christian Singing"?
- What is "Corporate Worship"?
- Should we even think of our weekly Gatherings on the Lord's Day as "Worship Services"?

But it is a glorious work! Because I'm not going to make things up. I'm not going to base my Answers to these Questions on my own Imagination or Preference or Culture or Tradition. And that is true because God has given us a Book- the Christian Scriptures, the Bible. And He has told us,

### **2Timothy 3:16&17**

**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

... and that includes the "Good Work" of knowing Who God is; and what "the Glory of God" refers to; and what it means for us to "glorify God," and why there is such a thing as "Singing"; and whether we are to *gather* for "Corporate Worship"; or only for "Instruction and Edification." God Himself has spoken about these things in His Word. And that makes them to be true. And it is a glorious Work to listen and understand and be changed and

joyfully obey what God has said.

So, what matters about this- is NOT my Opinion- but God's Special Revelation. So, if you see it in the Word- you should grab it like a man caught in a riptide clutching a rope. But if you *don't* see it in God's Word- then you owe me nothing, except perhaps polite pity that an old man from Gulfport was simply speaking nonsense into the air. But while my Opinions don't matter here- we must agree- yours don't either. So, by all means, test all things by the Word of God. And "hold fast" to what God has said and what you can see for yourself in the Book.

So, let's begin with God Himself. Who is God? The most *foundational* Statement about what it means to be God is found in **Exodus 3:14** where Moses wrote:

**God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"**

God had appeared to Moses to make him the Leader of Israel; and to bring them out of 400 years of slavery in Egypt. But Moses shrinks back and says in verse 11, **"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"** And God responds in verse 12, **"Certainly I will be with you."**

Yet Moses continues to argue about his own unworthiness in verse 13, **"I am going to the sons of Israel and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"** And God answers in verse 14,

**God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

But what does that mean? Why did God identify Himself that way? *"I am who I am. 'I absolutely am.'"* If we could just remove our clouded spectacles of mere religious tradition, this may come to us like a bolt of lightning. *God is. He is Who He is. He absolutely is.* But what does that mean? It means at least ten things.

Now I know that some of you are groaning right now, *"O come on, Brother Blair- that's all you talk about. We've heard you talk about this a million times. Can't you preach just one Sermon without going into Who God is?"* No, because that Question illustrates what is wrong with the modern Church; and what is so lacking in the modern pulpit. The Modern

Pulpit is filled with Politics; and “how to’s”; and cute phrases; and clever slogans- but the modern Pulpit is NOT filled with God. It is NOT filled with God; and the particulars of His Character and Attributes- so much so- that today the people of God no longer know Who they are worshipping. So, until God and His Glory burn white hot in our minds and hearts; and until every Issue of life- whether trial or blessing boils down to God and His Glory- I must continue to tell you with tears- that THE single most important commodity in the Universe- is God and His Glory! Nothing else comes close- not your life; or the life of your children; or what the Government is doing; or the coronavirus- NOTHING comes close to the Value and Worth and Importance of God and His Glory.

So, what does it mean when God said, “I am who I am”?

1. “*God is Who He is*” means He never had a beginning. And this staggers the mind. Every child asks, “*Who made God?*” And every wise parent says, “*Nobody made God. God simply is. And always has been. God has no beginning.*”
2. “*God is Who He is*” means God will never end. If He did not come into being, He cannot go out of being, because He *is* being. He is what is. There is no place to go outside of being. There is only He. Before He creates- that’s all that is: God.
3. “*God is Who He is*” means God is Absolute Reality. There is no Reality before Him. There is no Reality outside of Him unless He wills it and creates it and allows it. He is not one of many Realities before He creates. He is simply there- as Absolute Reality. He is all that was eternally. No space, no universe, no emptiness. Only God. Absolutely there. Absolutely all.
4. “*God is Who He is*” means that God is utterly Independent. He depends on nothing to bring Him into being; or to support Him; or counsel Him; or make Him what He is.
5. “*God is Who He is*” means everything that is “not God” depends totally *on* God. All that is “not God” is *secondary* and *dependent*. The entire Universe is utterly *secondary*. It is NOT *primary*. The Universe came into being by God speaking- and stays in being, moment by moment, on God’s decision to keep it in being.
6. “*God is Who He is*” means all the Universe is, by comparison to God, as nothing. Contingent, dependent Reality is to Absolute, Independent Reality as a shadow to substance — as an echo to a thunderclap, as a bubble to the ocean. So, all that we see; and all that we are amazed by in the world;



and all that we marvel at in the galaxies; is, compared to God, as nothing. If you put God on one side of the scales and the Universe on the other side, the Universe goes up in the scales as if it were dust. "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness" ([Isaiah 40:17](#)).

7. "*God is Who He is*" means that God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He cannot be improved or diminished. He cannot be improved. He is not *becoming* anything. He is Who He is. There is no development in God. No progress. Absolute perfection cannot be improved.

8. "*God is Who He is*" means that God is the Absolute Standard of Truth and Goodness and Beauty. There is no lawbook that He consults to know what is Right. No almanac to establish facts. No guild to determine what is Excellent or Beautiful. He Himself is the Standard of what is Right, what is True, and what is Beautiful.

9. "*God is Who He is*" means God does whatever He pleases. And what God does- is always Right; and always Beautiful; and always in accord with Truth. And that includes the beheading of believers by evil men. Because there are no constraints on God from outside of Him that could hinder Him in doing what pleases Him. All Reality that is outside of God- is subordinate to His sovereign Will. So, God is utterly free from any constraints that don't originate from the Counsel of His Own Will.

10. "*God is Who He is*" means that He is the greatest, most beautiful, most valuable, most important Person. He is more worthy of interest and attention and admiration and enjoyment than all other Realities put together — indeed the entire Universe.

And the pages of the Bible reveal and assume this supremely great; supremely beautiful; supremely valuable God- everywhere. And that brings us to our next Question: *What is the Glory of God?* The Glory of God is God's Greatness; and His Beauty; and His Worth on display. So, the Glory of God- is the Holiness of God- seen. Remember what the angels cried out in [Isaiah 6:2&3](#) as they flew in the Presence of God:

**Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:  
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!"**

Now why didn't they say, "*The whole earth is full of His Holiness*"? My suggestion is that the Holiness of God is the *intrinsic* Worth and Beauty and Greatness of God. It is the transcendent Greatness and Beauty and Worth that God has *in Himself*- that sets Him apart from any revelation or creation on display.

And when this Greatness; Beauty; and Worth shines forth in Revelation or in Demonstration for the world to know and admire and enjoy- that *part* of God; that *part* of God's Holiness- is called, the "Glory of God". **Hebrews 1:3** speaks of "the *radiance* of the Glory of God." So, Glory has radiance- moving out from God into the Universe. And that is why David wrote:

### **Psalm 91:1**

**"The heavens are telling of the glory of God"**

- **God's Greatness:** referring to His scope, extent, and grandeur.
- **God's Beauty:** referring to the Perfections of all His Attributes and the infinite Harmony of their Interrelationships.
- **God's Worth/Value:** referring to the fact that God is a Treasure more precious; more valuable; more to be desired than anything or anyone else in the Universe- or all the Universe itself.

... and when *some*; or *all* of that is manifested or seen or revealed- THAT is the "Glory of God."

But I am ashamed to tell you that for many years of my Christian experience- the Greatness and the Beauty and the Worth of God- in other words- the Glory of God- was NOT a dominant Reality in my life. It wasn't until I began to teach verse- by- verse through **Romans** that I saw just how *dominant* the Glory of God is in the Purposes and Works of God Himself. Let me try to show you what I mean by giving you one Passage of Scripture to describe God's ultimate Goal in six of His main Works in the unfolding of History — beginning to end.

**1.Predestination:** "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:5&6).

2. **Creation**: “Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the end of the earth, Everyone who is called by my name, And *whom I have created for My glory*, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made” (Isaiah 43:6&7).
3. **Incarnation**: “For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “*Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!*” (Luke 2:11-14).
4. **Substitution in Christ’s Work on the Cross**: “Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation [a means of satisfying God’s Wrath] in His blood through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness*, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of *His righteousness* at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25&26).
5. **Sanctification**: “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may . . . [be] filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, *to the glory and praise of God*” (Philippians 1:9-11).
6. **Consummation** — the Second Coming of Christ: “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from *the glory of His power*, when He comes *to be glorified* in His saints on that day, and *to be marveled at* among all who have believed” (2Thessalonians 1:9&10).

My conclusion from these six Passages (and there are literally dozens of others), is that God’s ultimate, all-encompassing Goal in Creation and in Redemption and in the Consummation of all things- is *that His Glory be known and admired and enjoyed- in other words- that He alone will be glorified-* in, by, and through all that happens. In other words, God Himself is *radically* “God-centered” in His Purposes.

Therefore, you exist, your family exists, your church exists, America exists; Gulfport exists, and the world exists- to glorify God.

But what does that mean for us: to *glorify* or to *magnify* God? To glorify God does NOT mean that we *make* God to be glorious. NO! God is already glorious. Infinitely glorious. It means for us to *experience* God for what He truly is — dominant, majestic, weighty, great, beautiful, and worthy. It means for us to *show* Him to be- *exactly* Who and what He is.

But there are two ways to magnify something:

- With a microscope
- With a telescope

You can “magnify” a human cell under a microscope and make something that is very tiny- look *bigger* than it really is. And trying to magnify God like that- is blasphemy.

Or you can “magnify” a star with a telescope and make something that looks tiny (about the size of a pencil eraser in the sky) and show it to be something like it *really* is: *bigger* than our entire solar system. Trying to magnify God like that- glorifies God.

The Truth is that God appears to most people like a small, little twinkle, twinkle little star- when in fact, He is so great- He could carry the Universe in His pocket like a peanut.

The reason we exist is to glorify God like that. To magnify God like that- to *experience* Him; and *show* Him to be what He really is. Another name for this is “Worship”. And yes, *all of life*, Paul says in **Romans 12:1&2** is Worship, because the Purpose of all of life is to experience and show the Greatness, Beauty, and Worth of God.

Now *why* do I use those two expressions for glorifying or worshiping God:

- That we must *experience* God for Who He really is
- We must *show* God for Who He really is

... because “*Experiencing* God” is an *invisible* Act of two things: the mind- knowing; and the heart- feeling. But “*Showing* God” is a *visible* Act of the body- doing. And *both* of these are parts of authentic Worship. So, where either is missing- the other is incomplete.

If we try to *show* God when we haven’t actually had an *Experience* in God ourselves- that called *Hypocrisy*. And Jesus condemned it: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.” (Matthew 23:25).**

But if we think we have *experienced* God and yet there is no impulse to *show* God- that is called “Dead”. And James condemned that. **“Faith, if it**

**has no works, is dead, being by itself” (James 2:17). And so did Jesus, “So every good tree bears good fruit” (Matthew 7:17).**

The inward Experience that glorifies God is *knowing* God truly, and *feeling* Him duly. Knowledge that is *true* to God; and Feelings that are *due* to God. We simply *cannot* glorify God as we ought without *Knowledge* that accords with God’s Truth (Word) and *Feelings* that accord with God’s Greatness and Beauty and Worth.

And so, Paul could say this about the single most religious people on earth:

### **Romans 10:2**

**They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge**

And that is true- because a Knowledge of God- without the heart experiencing the Greatness and Beauty and Worth of God- is the Knowledge of demons:

### **James 2:19**

**“The demons also believe, and shudder!”**

We must understand that Demons *know* the Truth- maybe better than we do. So, they’re not going to burn forever- because of their ignorance about God. But demons do not LOVE the Truth. And demons don’t love God. And they don’t love God- because God has not allowed them to. So, demons are dead to both the Truth of God and to God personally. And that’s bad- but lost people are spiritually dead too. And lost people DON’T love the Truth either- because lost people don’t love God. So, a real and authentic and biblical Experience of God must be:

### **Knowing God truly and feeling Him duly**

Now let’s connect all of this to Corporate Worship and Singing. Here’s what Paul tells us to do when we meet together as God’s people:

**do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to [addressing] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;**

... and ...

**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

... this is what our Lord's Day Service should look like. And so, in these two Passages- there are at least 6 steps toward singing- that will bring about true Worship where people know God truly and feel Him duly.

1. **Corporate Worship begins with the Word of Christ.** "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" And this means that we don't sing our opinions- any more than we preach our opinions. And so, it matters what we sing- in the same way it matters what we teach. So, we should sing what God has revealed- grounded in; governed by; and saturated with the Word of God. And that allows for our hearts and minds to be alive and active- riveted on Truth.
2. **The fullness of the Holy Spirit illumines the Word and reveals Christ.** "Be filled with the Spirit." The highest and best Act of God the Holy Spirit- is to glorify Jesus Christ.
3. **We see Christ for Who He really is.** And so, we know that there is no direct access to God in Worship- except through Christ- crucified and risen. And that is why we come to God in Worship- "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ".
4. **Our hearts are moved by the fullness of the Spirit with Affections like Thankfulness:** "singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. True Worship exists when the mind is alive with the *Truth* of God and the heart is alive with biblical *Affections* for God.
5. **The focus of our mind is on God.** And so, these biblical Affections of our hearts for God overflow in singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"
6. **Our singing is addressed both to God and to our brothers and sisters.** "Speaking to [addressing] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" The fact that we are singing "to the Lord" makes it *Worship*. But the fact that we are singing to be heard by each other- makes it *Corporate*. And that is why we call it, "*Corporate Worship*."

So, here is the Pattern of *authentic*, Corporate Worship:

- The Word of Christ;
- Illumined by the Fullness of the Spirit;
- Revealing Christ's Truth; Greatness; Beauty; and Worth
- Awakens heartfelt, biblical Affections;
- That overflow in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
- To God and each other.

And we must take heed to ourselves that we do not believe that *some* songs are sung to God in Corporate Worship (like "*Great Is Thy Faithfulness, O God my Father*"), while *others* are sung only to believers (like "*Come, Christians, join to sing!*"). No! All *three* types of music are to be sung- for *both* audiences: to be heard by God; AND to be heard by other believers.

So, nobody should put on noise-canceling headphones during "*Great Is Thy Faithfulness*" simply because we are singing to God. And, conversely, nobody in his right mind should think that "*Come, Christians, join to sing!*" is not to be heard by God; for His Glory and for His Pleasure. No, ALL singing in Corporate Worship is for God AND for each other.

Now, I have been praying and agonizing over this Issue for a long time. And I probably won't make anyone happy by saying what I'm about to say. But you need to know that I didn't come up with this last Thursday. I have been saved for almost 50 years and I have been in Ministry for nearly as long. So, I have seen and heard a lot about what songs we should sing. And this is my honest conclusion. So, with apologies to John Calvin (who said we should ONLY sing the Psalms) the Covenant of Peace Church should sing: Psalms; Hymns; and Spiritual Songs- just like the Bible says.

Now to sing the **Psalms** is harder than it looks- because they don't rhyme in English (and some are pretty long, too.) That's because they were originally written in Hebrew. But we don't speak (or sing) in Hebrew; and so, to sing the Psalms in English *requires* us to edit words and phrases to a certain degree. And many, many, many people have done that over the 2,000- year History of the Church- most notably Isaac Watts.

But people who have lived during my lifetime have done the very same thing. The Bible doesn't say, "*Sing the Psalms as transcribed by Isaac Watts*". It simply tells us to sing the **Psalms**. So, to me- it doesn't

matter who transcribed it- if the song is in line with what the **Psalm** actually says- then it should go into the collection that we may sing.

Now most scholars seem to think that what Paul was talking about when he used the word, "Hymns" were songs that were theologically rich- *but not necessarily direct quotations from the Bible*. So, for example, the second verse of "*Before the Throne of God Above*" does not quote Scripture directly. But, more than most every other song I know- this verse summarizes the Theology behind how an infinitely Righteous God can pardon a guilty sinner and still remain Just Himself:

When satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who put an end to all my Sin  
Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free  
And God the Just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me

Now it is true that many so-called, "Worship Songs" written in the last fifty years are very shallow; and, in many cases, even unbiblical- even though they have a catchy tune that is easily played on drums and guitars. But if a song is not theologically true- then it isn't a Hymn- no matter how popular it might be.

But we must also agree that God didn't stop moving upon people to write Hymns 500 years ago. If so, then Jesus failed; and the Church stopped growing before America ever became a nation. The value of a Hymn is NOT its age; or how "high church" it may sound- but its adherence to Biblical Theology. Believe it or not- there were some very ungodly and unbiblical Hymns written many hundreds of years ago. So, we should include Hymns that *qualify* as Hymns- no matter how new or old they might be. But to *limit* our singing to only older Hymns- is using the same logic as the "KJV only" crowd- who teach that you're really not saved unless you use the KJV. That argument is both silly and offensive. So, let us sing Hymns. And let us sing ALL the Hymns. But let them truly be Hymns.

Now what Paul meant when he said, "Spiritual Songs" has been a mystery to most people since he wrote it- 2,000 years ago. Some have suggested that "Spiritual Songs" are songs that are given by the Holy Spirit-



*spontaneously* during a Service. And that may be true. And I would have absolutely no objection to songs like that- *but only if they were in accord with Scripture*. I have personally asked John MacArthur; RC Sproul; Mark Dever; Steve Lawson; Paul Washer; and Ligon Duncan what qualifies as “Spiritual Songs” and *none* of them knew the Answer for sure. When I suggested that they MIGHT be songs that are straight from the Bible- excluding the **Psalms**- they all said that was the best answer they had ever heard. So, I feel qualified to tell you that “Spiritual Songs” are songs that come from a verse or a Passage right from the Bible- excluding the **Psalms**. And by definition- these may be more like “choruses” than outright songs. An example of a “Spiritual Song” *might* be:

The Joy of the Lord is my Strength (**Nehemiah 8:10**)

The Joy of the Lord is my Strength

And if this Joy is in my life

I will conquer Sin and Strife

Because the Joy of the Lord is my Strength

The Peace of the Lord is my Health (**Philippians 4:7**)

The Peace of the Lord is my Health

And if this Peace is deep in me

I will have the Victory (**Romans 16:20**)

Because the Peace of the Lord is my Health

The Word of the Lord is my Life (**John 1:1&4**)

The Word of the Lord is my Life

And if this Word abides in Me

I will live eternally (**John 15:7**)

Because the Word of the Lord is my Life

So, what should we say to those who argue that the New Testament never calls Christian corporate Gatherings “Worship Services” and therefore- it is wrong to think of our Gatherings as “Worship Services.”

Here’s what I would say: *“To suggest that we should gather as Christians to teach and edify- but NOT to awaken and express Godward Affections- is like calling for Marriage without Intimacy. Or Eating without Taste. Or Discovery without Delight. Or Miracles without Wonder. Or Gifts without Gratefulness. Or Warnings without Fear. Or Repentance without*

*Regret. Or Resolve without Zeal. Or Seeing without Enjoying.*" No! No! No!

Of course, our gathering is for Edification- to obey what Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:12-16:**

**for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**

... so, without doing this- we really don't have a Church.

So, Yes! Yes! Yes! **Let ALL THINGS be done for Edification (1Corinthians 14:26b)** But edified into what? Built up for what? Here is how Peter answered that Question in **1Peter 2:5:**  
**you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

... and one of those "spiritual sacrifices" is the "sacrifice of praise" to God that the writer of **Hebrews** talked about in **Hebrews 13:15:**

**Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**

Now God *could* have created a world without any music and without any singing. He *could* have made everything blue; and He *could* have made all food taste the same. God *could* have brought forth children out of tulips; and God *could* have made a world that had no Beauty at all. And in His capacity as the Owner and Creator of the Universe- God *could* have created people- who had no capacity to laugh; or to cry; or to have any emotions at all. He *could* have- but He didn't.

God would be glorified if humans only had mental and intellectual qualities. But as God counselled with Himself- He created a world that has

Art; and Music; and Love; and six million Colors; and amazing Tastes; fantastic Sounds; and many, many Emotions. And the reason He did this- is NOT because He was bored; or because He wanted things to be noisy. No, God determined that His Grace would best be seen and marveled at- if wicked rebels had the capacity to not merely *know*- but to actually *love* and *enjoy* Who they worshipped. In fact- God set it up so that unless those sinners are so converted that they do love and do enjoy Him- they really DON'T Worship Him- at all.

So, God is NOT exalted merely because lost people come to know Him. God is NOT honored by people who grudgingly come to the conclusion that He exists. And God is NOT worshipped by people, who praise Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. (**Isaiah 29:13**).

No, God looks utterly magnificent when wicked rebels come to know God (by what God alone does for them) to the degree- that they genuinely *love* Him and *enjoy* Him- forever! God looks magnificent when He becomes the Treasure of the Universe to people, who were born in Sin and shaped in Iniquity. And God is worshipped *best*- when humans are so radically transformed that they hunger and thirst after Righteousness; when they pant after God the way a deer pants for the water-brooks; and when they search through the streets of the City to find the One Whom their soul loves.

Now I am NOT promoting Emotionalism. In fact, I categorically *reject* Emotionalism as being the Goal of Christianity. But I also reject Intellectualism too. The Knowledge of God; the Truth of Scripture; and the veracity of Divine Law are NOT Ends to themselves. No, the right and correct and full Knowledge of God- produces a *response* in us; they create an Affection in us; and they cause a deep-seated manifestation from us- that is *better* than intellect; and *more important* than electrical neurons in our brains sparking as we agree with some historical facts about Jesus. God created us with the capacity to love; and to delight; and to enjoy-Him. And God gave us Gifts like Satisfaction; and Happiness; and Joy.

And Sin ruined all that. And so, now we love darkness; and things that are made; and things that are passing away- *more* than we love the One Who made all those things- and us as well. And so, we do not normally or naturally love what is the most loveable. We do not delight in what is most delightful. And we do not enjoy what is most enjoyable.

And that is *why* God took on flesh and became Man. Jesus lived a sinless Life; died a vicarious Death as our Propitiation; was raised from the dead on the third day; and ascended up to Heaven to sit at the Right Hand of

the Majesty on High- so that we could have our eyes unveiled so we could see. And what is it that God wants us to see? What is it that satan has worked so hard to blind the minds of those who are perishing so that they won't see?

### **2Corinthians 4:4b**

**... the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

So, what happens when God sovereignly unveils our eyes so we can see? Four things:

- We see the great contrast between ourselves and the risen Christ
- We hate our Sins and we turn from them (Repentance)
- We love what we see in Jesus
- We are changed into what we see- first by being saved and then by our progressive Sanctification

... and the most mysterious and wonderful thing happens: We truly love God; and we find the fullness of our own Joy and Satisfaction in Him being made much of.

So, when people, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth sing- and they sing *loudly*; and they sing from *thankfulness* for all God has done *in* them and *for* them; and when they sing *together*- a new God-designed; God-reflecting Beauty comes into being. Because unlike anything else- singing has a peculiar Power to awaken and express strong Affections. Jonathan Edwards said,

“The duty of singing praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious Affections. No other reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music, but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our Affections.”

And God made these song-awakened; song-carried Affections for Himself. So, Christian singing is the musical use of the voice to express Divine Truth that accords with God's *Word*. And that produces godly and biblical Affections that accord with God's *Worth*. And both of those- are Gifts

beyond measuring! Therefore, as the Church of Jesus- let us sing!

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.