

## VETERAN'S DAY

We know that maintaining freedom and protection over a nation and its people requires the willingness of citizens to make sacrifices and risk their lives to serve in the role of protector and defender. Today, we want to recognize and thank those who have or currently serve our nation in any of the branches of our military:

- Army
- Marines
- Navy
- Airforce
- Coastguard
- Spaceforce

## ELECTION UPDATE

What a week for our nation. The people have certainly sent a mandate to the Republican party to govern this nation over the next four years. Now is not the time for the church to put things on cruise control as though our trust is in elected officials. Our president and his administration will need our prayers more than ever, namely that this historic opportunity isn't wasted regarding the issue of protecting the unborn, standing against perversion, and standing with and for Israel. For me, and many in Missouri, it was a bittersweet day. Our state passed Amendment 3, enshrining abortion rights into our state's constitution. This is actually a sobering commentary on the republican party. Obviously, liberals showed up in record numbers to see that amendment passed, but Republicans helped. We need to ask how a state can vote overwhelmingly Republican for nearly every office (minus a couple of house seats) and then turn around and legalize abortion. Part of what it says is that some "conservatives" voted for Trump because it meant a better economy for them, and voted for abortion, stripping rights away from unborn persons. To prioritize wealth and prosperity above protecting against the murder of thousands of babies is selfish, ignorant, and idolatrous. But I'm not here to focus on the negative today. There are several takeaways that really excite and encourage me:

1. Out of the seven states that passed abortion legislation, Missouri had the highest percentage of people who stood against it at 48.5%. If Missouri had laws like Florida that required 60% of the vote to pass a constitutional amendment, that wouldn't have

passed. This is an encouragement to me. There are still many people in our state who will fight for the unborn life, and the battle for righteousness and life will continue.

2. [Rom 5:20-21 NKJV] 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God's grace will abound through His church even when sin seems victorious. This means we aren't putting things on cruise control. There may be many more young women who need our help now, and we will be ready to receive them.

This morning, we look to part two in our series ***Purposeful Praise: What We Sing. Let's read several passages this morning:***

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ephesians 5:18-20 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>18</sup> And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

<sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

<sup>20</sup> giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Colossians 3:16 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### John 4:23 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

## INTRODUCTION

When I was a young teenager, music was really starting to take hold of me. I started playing it and listening to it... a lot. I had a record player, vinyl, and a tape and CD collection that was constantly growing. I played in several bands and was influenced a ton by music. I remember my mom telling me she wasn't a fan of me listening to certain music because of the content. I used the age-old excuse many of our mouths have uttered, "Mom, I'm not listening to the words, just the music!"

- Isn't it ironic (no, I'm not quoting a song) that I can sing most of those songs today, years later, word for word by memory? Actually, thinking about some of those lyrics today makes me grateful that I was a fairly innocent kid back then. But even back then, I can see from this vantage point that some of that music and lyrical content had a less-than-desirable effect on my behavior and attitude.

While music is a form of communication within itself, stirring certain aspects of one's emotions, lyrics give the music intent and an agenda. While music is a delivery truck, the lyrics are the package.

**A study by Brattico et al. (2011) using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) revealed that music with lyrics activates brain regions associated with emotional processing more intensely than instrumental versions, highlighting the role of lyrics in conveying emotional depth.**

In other words, lyrics attached to music, have the ability to connect humans emotionally to certain concepts. And one of the most powerful voices within human nature is their emotions. This is one of many reasons why **WHAT** we sing matters when worshipping the Lord.

1. First, consider that we are singing **TO** and **FOR** the Lord first. If we desire God to be blessed, honored, and glorified in our worship, it goes without saying that we should

sing things that are accurate about God. The last thing we want is to sing TO God things that are untrue ABOUT God!

2. Secondly, consider that we are teaching ourselves and those around us things about God based on the lyrical content of our songs. To stress sound doctrine in our teaching but not in our singing is a conflict of interest. Yes, songs typically are more artistic, which means poetry, symbolism, and allegory will be used more, but that's never an excuse to use lyrical content that doesn't reflect biblical truth.

## ILLUSTRATION

To prove how powerful this emotional connection is to us, all I would have to do is show you how your all-time favorite worship song is theologically incorrect. You'll get defensive, you'll get protective, and I understand! I'm the same way. But worship leaders sometimes feel freedom to play fast and loose with lyrics, not realizing that they are potentially setting tens of thousands of people's view of God.

- But was the coming of Christ really like a sloppy, wet kiss?
- Is God's love reckless?
- Did Jesus really think of "above all? Even above His own glory?"
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## QUOTE

**“Every worship song contains the theological perspectives of the people who wrote them.”**

## APPLICATION

Now, I tend to take each new song I hear as an individual song first. Before I look at "who wrote this" I look at the lyrics. I think about them, compare them to scripture, ask what it's trying to teach me.

But this doesn't mean that ignorance is bliss. I do want to know the theological framework from which the song is coming so I know the potential pitfalls to be aware of within the song's lyrics.

This is Jenn Johnson of Bethel church. She is a worship leader and songwriter. I'd like you to hear her own words regarding her philosophy of defining who God is. **Watch this [video].**

## QUOTE

**“Wrong ideas about God are only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous. The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true.”**

AW Tozer

## APPLICATION

Why is this concerning? Well, I wouldn't really want that taught at this church for obvious reasons. You and I don't get to define God by "who he is to us," we define Him by Who He says He is in His word. His word says nothing about Him being funny, sneaky, or blue. However, she has participated in writing some of the most popular worship songs in the past 20 years. This may not mean I trash every song with her name attached to it, but I will examine it before I sing it and emotionally connect myself with its message.

Here's where we need a bit of understanding and caution:

A study by Shannan Baker, a postdoctoral fellow at Baylor University, examined 38 of the most popular worship songs released between 2010-2020 and found that 22 were initially released by four megachurches, with an additional eight songs released by artists affiliated with those churches.

- Hillsong, Bethel, Elevation, and Passion.
- That means four churches hold approximately 80% of the influence of the theology, style, and sound of worship music the larger church uses. Also, it happens to be the churches with the most money.

- There's nothing wrong with churches having financial resources, influence, or writing songs that are a blessing to the greater body of Christ. But when you begin to examine the philosophy and doctrine of some of these churches, you realize that there are things that range from spiritually unhealthy to flat heretical.

## 1 Our songs must be both spiritual and truthful

### APPLICATION

In John 4, Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that true worshippers worship the Father in Spirit and truth. From that one statement, several precedents are set:

1. First, true worship only happens when you worship the true God—"Those who worship that Father."
  1. We aren't worshipping an experience, a song, a leader... we are worshipping the One, living and true God.
2. God is worshipped in Spirit - it's a spiritual practice not relegated to one specific physical location, and it involves a spiritual dynamic that is more than physically playing and singing a song.
3. God is worshipped in truth - the true God is not honored when error is introduced into worship.

### ILLUSTRATION

***Psalms = Sing the Word***

***Hymns = Sing doctrinal songs that the congregation knows***

***Spiritual Songs = Sing the truth as led by the Spirit***

## PSALMS

The Greek word Psalmos simply means a song accompanied by music. This certainly is implied in Paul's writings, but Paul, as a Jew, would have used the word "Psalms" to indicate the Psalms of David, Israel's great worship leader of old. Paul saw the value of singing eternal truth, as inspired by the Holy Spirit and recorded by David in the Holy Scriptures.

- As you read the Psalms, you recognize that they cover every aspect of life and God. They cover the full spectrum of human emotions from joy to depression. They describe the human experience while always pointing the heart and mind back to center themselves on God and His salvation.
- Additionally, when you sing God's Word, you have a safety that you are singing and teaching yourself and others untainted truth. Singing the Psalms provides a solid foundation of worship being God-centered.
- Granted, this is one of the things the church in America does the least. Regarding the musical and poetic style of english, translating the Psalms into the kinds of song structure that we recognize and appeal to us can be challenging. But just because something is challenging is no excuse to ignore the clear call of scripture to put the written word of God to song, just as David did, and ancient Israel did, and the early church did.
- Spurgeon was once recorded as saying,

## QUOTE

**“I cannot endure songs for which there is no scripture.”**

Charles Spurgeon

## HYMNS

While still grounded in sound doctrine, hymns are truth put in lyrical, poetic and musical form that would be widely known in the church. This formal way of singing praise ensured that the church was united in their singing of the truth.

- NOTE Paul's usage of the word HYMN was not the same as ours today. In our context, when someone says "I like hymns" they are typically referring to Christian songs written in 18th and 19th centuries. That has more to do with a preference on the style of singing that was used in those times, and the lyrical structure and content of the songs, which arguably had far greater theological depth than the song of today.
  - On a side not, I think ancient hymns vs modern worship songs is not a battle worth dividni ng the church over. Let's all remember that there is only on HYMN (Him) in heaven, and it's HIM, the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - I often see Jesus' words as an appropriate part of a worship leader's job description: [**Mat 13:52 NKJV**] **52 Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."**
    - We should value the old, and let our hearts be refreshed by the new. We can sing ancient hymns, and we can have new, modern day hymns that communicate, in a relevant way, the timeless truths of scripture.

## Hymns: Rooted in Doctrine and Tradition

Hymns, unlike spontaneous spiritual songs, are structured, intentional compositions that are deeply rooted in theological truths. They have a history of being carefully crafted to encapsulate core doctrines, aiming to teach, remind, and strengthen the faith of the church. Hymns often distill complex truths into memorable phrases that both educate and inspire. They resonate with the words of Paul in *Colossians 3:16*, where he urges believers to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

The inclusion of “hymns” in this triad highlights their role in creating a shared theological foundation within the church community. Unlike spontaneous songs, hymns are pre-written expressions of praise, often drawing on the entirety of Scripture and summarizing God’s attributes, the gospel, or other truths of the faith. These songs of structured praise serve as a reliable anchor, grounding worship in timeless truths. We even see some ancient hymns in the NT scripture:

1. **1 Timothy 3:16** – This verse, structured like a hymn or creed, emphasizes Christ's incarnation, work, and exaltation.
  - ***"He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."*** This passage exemplifies the type of theological depth that hymns often embody. The rhythm and repetition help believers remember foundational truths, making doctrine accessible and memorable.



2. **Philippians 2:6-11** – Known as the *Christ Hymn*, this passage poetically outlines Christ's humility and exaltation.

- **"Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped..."** This hymn serves as a powerful reminder of Jesus' sacrificial love and divine humility, qualities central to Christian faith. Hymns like this reinforce the doctrine of the incarnation, helping believers internalize key aspects of the gospel.

## The Doctrinal Safeguard of Hymns

EXAMPLE: My accident as a teenager and saved by the guardrail.

Hymns are timeless songs carefully composed to align with Scripture, serving as a safeguard for sound doctrine. By being grounded in the truths of God's Word, they act as spiritual "guardrails," preventing worship from veering into emotionalism or personal interpretation that contradicts biblical truth. Paul's instruction in *2 Timothy 1:13* to "follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me" echoes the purpose of hymns: they serve as "sound words" that uphold truth and shape the congregation's understanding of God.

## Hymns Unite the Church Across Generations

Hymns have a unique ability to connect believers across different times and cultures. When we sing a hymn, we join a chorus of saints who have sung these same words, making hymns a bridge across the centuries. This timeless quality is especially significant in church gatherings, where the community sings not only with those present but also in unity with the faith of past generations. Hymns remind us that our faith is part of a broader historical and global family of believers.

Unlike spiritual songs that are often momentary, hymns endure, continually serving as a testimony to God's truth and faithfulness. In *Psalms 145:4*, we read, **"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts."** Hymns serve this purpose well—they allow each generation to pass down a confession of faith, declaring the mighty works of God to future generations through song.

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### SPIRITUAL SONGS

## The Source of "Spiritual" Songs

The term *pneumatikos* (πνευματικός) in Greek, which translates to "spiritual," **comes from *pneuma*, meaning "spirit" or "wind."** This connection to "wind" is foundational in understanding the nature of spiritual songs. Jesus speaks of the Spirit in terms of wind in John 3:8:

- ***"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."***

This verse highlights how the Holy Spirit operates beyond human control or prediction, touching hearts in unique, often fleeting moments. Just as the wind comes and goes, spiritual songs arise spontaneously, meant to address the immediate needs or experiences of the gathered believers. They are Spirit-initiated, meant to lift and edify, drawing the believer closer to God in that moment.

## Biblical Examples of Spirit-Led Songs

1. **1 Corinthians 14:15** – Paul mentions singing “with the spirit” and “with the mind”:

- ***“What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.”***
- Here, Paul contrasts intellectual worship with Spirit-inspired expression. He suggests a dynamic worship where believers are open to singing “with the spirit” as the Spirit moves, allowing the heart to respond to God beyond structured hymns.

2. **Ephesians 5:18-19** – Paul commands believers to be filled with the Spirit, followed by **“addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”**

- The presence of “spiritual songs” suggests a song inspired by the Spirit in real-time, rather than a structured or planned hymn. These songs are meant to build up and encourage the congregation, reflecting God’s work and presence in that exact moment.

## Spiritual Songs Are Rooted in Truth

While spiritual songs are spontaneous and Spirit-led, they remain consistent with scripture and truth. These moments are aligned with the Spirit’s purpose, as John 16:13 says:

- ***"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..."***

Thus, a true spiritual song will never contradict scripture but will affirm it, bringing out fresh understanding, comfort, or encouragement from God’s Word. It’s as if the Spirit takes a deep

truth and brings it alive in the heart of the believer, inspiring them to sing that truth in a way that touches others.

EXAMPLE: I sang a song over the women at the women's retreat, prompted by the Spirit, not knowing what I was going to sing until I opened my mouth.

## 2 Our songs must engage our entire being

### BIBLE PASSAGE

**[Psa 108:1-3 ESV] 1 A Song. A Psalm of David. My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody with all my being! 2 Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! 3 I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.**

### BIBLE PASSAGE

## Matthew 22:37 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

### APPLICATION

On the spectrum of how people tend to engage praise and worship through song, you can have two extremes:

## 1. The Emotional Rollercoaster

## 2. The Stoic Philosopher

There are those who are only concerned with how the music makes them feel. They define good and bad worship by how inspired they felt, how much they cried, or how they much they felt like lifting their hands or standing to their feet. They often equate their feelings with the presence of God (I'll talk more about that in the next point).

There are others who seem to believe it is more spiritual to deny any type of emotional feeling or expression, and divorce those feelings from the worship process. Worship is merely a pragmatic act of obedience to the scripture. They will sing, and they will think. They will critique the words, then move beyond critique to become the worship police.

### APPLICATION

The reality of worship is it's a relational practice between us and God. God is Spirit, and he must be worshipped in spirit. We are spirit, body, and soul, which means that every part of our being becomes engaged in a worship response to God.

- People get into so many arguments about emotionalism in worship or what kinds of expression are acceptable. But we need to take a much simpler look at this.

**Emotions:** God created us emotional beings. We have emotions and affections. I believe it was John Wesley who said that our emotions are often driven by our affections. The things we love and care about produce emotional responses to those things.

- If I can shout in elation when the Chiefs score a touchdown, that is an acceptable expression of emotion.
- If I can hug and kiss my wife when I see her because my feelings well up inside me, that is an appropriate expression of emotion.
- But for some reason, people get into a singing environment at church and wonder if they are allowed to express emotion to God.

***IMPORTANT: We have a living Savior who is present with us by His Spirit who is in us and with us. He is Holy, He is King, He loves us and has accepted us because of His great love, His sacrifice, His Grace, and His victory. He saves us, heals us, and empowers us. And He has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness. He is God in the highest who has brought man in the lowest into favor with Him! If we can't get***

***joyful, excited, humbled, and overwhelmed by that, we might need to take a look at why hardness has set into our hearts!***

Emotion is not the enemy in praise and worship. However, idolatry and mis-prioritisation of emotion can become major problems in worship.

### **1. Our emotions are expressions of our hearts, not indicators of true worship.**

1. Your emotions are tainted by sin. Therefore, they should be measured and weighed according to God's Word. In other words, your feelings aren't the final authority in life or worship; God's Word is. We worship, sing, and engage ourselves when we feel like it and when we don't.
2. We also recognize that our feelings don't always mean everything is right. Just because I feel tingles or tears doesn't mean the song I'm singing is good. It doesn't mean that God is ok with the sin I'm living in after I sing and cry on Sunday.

### **2. Our emotions are not markers of judgment toward one another.**

1. We don't judge whether people are genuinely worshipping based on their external emotional expression.
2. Yes, emotions and physical expressions often can reflect what's in our hearts, but we all express emotion differently. The person dancing, crying, or bowing in the aisle shouldn't be judged negatively or assumed positively based on their expression. Neither should the person be negatively judged who is more outwardly stoic but inwardly crying out with their heart, engaging their mind, and lifting their voice.

### **3. Our emotions are not indicators of God's presence.**

1. Can you have an emotional response to God's presence? YES. But does that mean that everything you feel represents God's presence? No. Again, the authority is not how we feel, but what God's Word tells us.
2. It's dangerous to say something like, "I didn't cry during worship today; God didn't show up. Maybe it had nothing to do with God. Perhaps something is going on in your heart or life that impacted your emotional state.

## **OUR MINDS**

We rob ourselves and God when we worship without engaging our emotions and expressions. But it's just as dangerous to disengage our minds from the process of praise. It's dangerous when you're willing to throw away discernment because you're chasing an emotional high or experience. I need to worship God with my mind.

**[Psa 77:6 ESV] 6 I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart." Then my spirit made a diligent search:**

Christian meditation is uniquely different from Eastern meditation. Eastern Meditation is the process of emptying your mind in order to be swept away into a spiritual experience. Christian meditation is not the emptying of the mind, but the filling of the mind with the word and realities of God.

When we worship, the goal isn't to put ourselves into a mindless trance so we can "lose ourselves in God." the goal is to fill our minds with such truth that our spirits begin to diligently search for God to know Him. This is one of the most concerning trends I've seen in our modern worship. Music and lyrics seem to be designed around creating an experience rather than meditating to the truth.

## ILLUSTRATION

*Song lyrics often mirror societal changes. A study analyzing 12,000 songs from 1980 to 2020 found that lyrics have become simpler, more repetitive, and express increased negative emotions like anger and sadness. This trend suggests that contemporary music reflects broader societal shifts toward individualism and negative emotional states.*

## APPLICATION

This is a sad commentary about what is happening to worship.

- Songs are becoming increasingly more focused on self and individualism rather than God and His glory.
- Worship choruses are becoming less thoughtful and more repetitive, disengaging the mind from the process of singing.

**EXAMPLE:** The other day, I put a random worship set list from Spotify on to listen. There were some songs I knew, but many I had never heard before. I was shocked by what I heard... 5 out of 7 songs I listened to were mind-numbing... not because they weren't my stylistic preference. It was because from anywhere between 3 - 7 minutes, some of these songs repeated the same three chords and five words over and over and over again until I had to shut it off because I could handle this attempt to put me into some sort of mindless trance.

In a **2014 study** in the Journal of Consumer Psychology, it was demonstrated that repetitive lyrics in music were a key indicator in how likely a song would reach the top spots on the Billboard list. In other words, the more repetitive the lyrics, the more people became psychologically attached to a song.

- I understand and appreciate repetition in music to a certain degree. In the Bible, there is repetition in some Psalms. In Psalm 136, the phrase "His mercy endures forever" repeats 26 times... but in between each time, a new truth about God is introduced. There are things worth repeating: Holy, Holy, Holy, but never with the intent to stop thinking.

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Psalms 47:7 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>7</sup> For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding.

#### APPLICATION