



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17

“And do not get drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father” (Eph. 5:18-20 CSB)

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom *teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Col. 3:16-17 CSB)

1. Brief introduction

- a. Worship means to ascribe worth
- b. The Father seeks our worship (John 4:23)
- c. Worship is not limited to location. Rather, true worshipers are those who worship in Spirit & in truth. d. Anyone is welcome
- d. As we read in this section, worship includes congregational singing—“one another”

2. Instructions for the early church on what to do when gathering

- a. Contrasts between what *not* to do, with what you ought to do
 - a. Do not get drunk with wine/be filled by the spirit (Eph. 5:18) – More than a warning against drunkenness – it’s a reference to the pagan rituals of the time. Do not do what *they* do (drunken pagan worship ceremonies) (‘drinking from the cup of demons,’ 1 Cor. 10:19-20). Instead, ‘be filled by the Spirit’
- b. Describes what should be done when gathering
 - a. Speak to one another with songs (Eph. 5:19)
 - b. Teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16)

- c. Be thankful to God—always, for everything (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:16b)
- c. Importance of Col. 3:16—‘Sister verse’ to Eph. 5:19
 - a. “Colossians 3:16 (& its parallel Eph 5:19) is important for a biblical understanding concerning the role of music in the Church’s gathered, corporate worship. I want to raise the worship standard. God loves music. He is honored & glorified in a way that makes it unlike any other medium. There is something special about God’s people singing praises to him. ...When rightly translated & understood, Col. 3:16 elevates the role of musical worship to its proper place.”—Barry Joslin
 - b. Col. 3:16 *elevates* the role of musical worship to its proper place. Here is how I suggest the verse be translated: ‘Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you, *teaching & admonishing one another* with all wisdom *by means of psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs*, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.’ —Barry Joslin [Note: This matches the CSB rendering.]
 - c. The ESV has: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching & admonishing one another in all wisdom, *singing psalms & hymns & spiritual songs*, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col. 3:16 ESV) **Note:** By moving ‘singing’ forward the ESV separates it from ‘teaching & admonishing’ & places ‘psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs’ with ‘singing.’ This reinforces the ‘default position’ that separates ‘teaching’ from ‘singing/worship’. But, Col. 3:16 does not do this!

3. A list of separate actions, or a cohesive liturgy?

- a. Depending on how the verses [Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17] are translated, Paul’s instructions could be interpreted as a list of independent activities (teach, admonish, sing, give thanks), or as one cohesive procession, all supporting one another (teach and admonish and sing and give thanks, etc.—all modifying “be filled by the Spirit” or “Let Christ’s word indwell”)
 - a. “Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach & counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms & hymns & spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.” – NLT [Separate sentences/commands]
 - b. “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching & admonishing one another with psalms & hymns & spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” – NASB [One sentence, related actions]
- b. One could easily view church activities as a list of things to do, perhaps much like a chore list (sweep the floors, clean the windows, clear the gutters). Paul’s method of writing indicates this list of activities are not imperatives, rather, individual participles (activities) supporting the main verb— “*Let Christ’s word indwell you*” (Col.), “*Be filled by the Spirit*” (Eph.)
- c. This tells us that teaching, admonishing, singing, and giving thanks, are all part of a cohesive church practice. When we sing, we can (must) teach, admonish, and give thanks, etc.
 - “Paul wants the community to teach and admonish each other by means of various kinds of songs, and he wants them to do this singing to God with hearts full of gratitude.” —Douglas J. Moo
 - “The main point...is that corporate, musical worship is an essential, God-ordained *means* of our teaching & admonishing one another, such that the word of Christ might richly dwell in us.” —Barry Joslin

4. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs

- o “Christ has revealed His design for singing in the life of the church. We are not left to our own preferences...when it comes to the basic principles. In Col. 3:16 & Eph. 5:19 Paul gives a brief, pointed & clear exhortation to the church regarding the role of singing...There can be no God-honoring singing in the congregation of the saints apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The command to be singing to one another & to the Lord in Eph. 5:19 is subordinate to the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit in 5:18...In Ephesians Paul shows that *wise living is Spirit-filled living* ...The effects of being filled with the Spirit include Christ-centered, Spirit-produced, God-honoring worship in the church. *Singing in the church is to be a manifestation of being filled with the Spirit.*” [Frank Griffith, “...*Singing in the Life & Worship of the Church*,” Reformation & Revival, Vol. 4, #4, 1995, pp. 38-40]
- o “Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs’...likely...refer both to the canonical psalms [in the OT book of *Psalms*] and to contemporary compositions of praise.” [ESV]
 - a. The Psalms were sung by God’s people in OT and in the early church, and even today
 - b. Hymns are songs of celebration or praise of God
 - c. Spiritual songs are those that are sung spontaneously, spiritually inspired
 - d. Some view this list as a limitation on style (only these three types are permitted). In reality, Paul is doing the opposite— listing *all* types of songs that were relevant at the time. The Bible does not seek to constrain our singing, rather, to free it

- a. Psalm 33:1-4 “Sing for joy in the Lord, you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the Lord is right, and all His work is done in faithfulness.”
- b. We are free to use, & should use, many instruments, skillfully, loudly, as thanksgiving to all his work he has done. Just as his faithfulness is not constrained, our expression of worship must also not be constrained

5. Singing is an ‘essential means’ of teaching & admonishment

- a. The early churches did not have a NT Bible from which to teach. Paul’s letters were the first writings of the NT
- b. Many of the people in the early church were illiterate, and could not read the OT or the letters from the apostles.
 - a. The book of Romans was sent to Phoebe as one to deliver (& read it) to the church in Rome
- c. A common way to teach was to sing
 - a. Philippians 2:6-11 was likely a hymn that was sung by the early church, included in Scripture by Paul
 - Phil. 2:6-11 “is often referred to as the ‘hymn of Christ’...Phil. 2:6-11 have some clear indications of poetic structure, leading some to believe...this is a pre-Pauline *hymn* adapted by Paul. It’s just as likely...that Paul composed the hymn for this setting.” [ESV] Either way, scholars recognize this profound passage takes the form of a hymn-for singing.
 - b. Exodus 15 – the Song of Moses & Miriam
- d. We should also incorporate teaching, admonishment, and thanksgiving in our singing (Col. 3:16)
 - “*Teaching & admonishing one another with...psalms, hymns & spiritual songs, singing...to God*” (Col. 3:16)
 - Col. 3:16 “raises the question, ‘How is [Christ’s] word...to dwell in us...& what does that have to do with musical worship?’... [Answer: According to Col. 3:16] ‘Psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs’...are an *essential means* of teaching & admonishing, such that the word of Christ richly dwells in believers.”– Barry Joslin
 - “Psalms & hymns & spiritual songs [are] one means of teaching & admonishing. Corporate worship has a teaching function through the lyrics of its songs. This was particularly important in the oral culture of Paul’s day.” ESV
 - “The Colossian & Ephesian churches are to instruct one another by means of all manner of musical praise. This is to characterize their worship. It should also characterize ours.”–Barry Joslin
 - “The teaching & admonishing that gives voice to the word of Christ comes to expression in worship through ‘psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs.’...Corporate musical worship is an *essential means* by which the people of Christ are taught & admonished.”– Barry Joslin

6. How we approach singing at CIT

- a. We put thought into our song selection, & time & effort into our practice. As Psalm 33 directs, we strive to play skillfully.
- b. Mission statement of CIT’s worship team: “*To engage the church community into genuine worship of God*”
- c. Three requirements for accepting a song in our repertoire:
 - a. Is it biblically accurate? (i.e. does it teach properly)
 - b. Is it relevant to our church? (both technically & theologically)
 - c. Is it accessible? (not too difficult, not too distracting, can everyone join in?)
- d. Choosing songs for Sunday (this may help anybody choosing songs e.g. for small groups, kids’ events, family singing, etc)
 - a. Generally, the first song is one of invitation. Similar to Psalm 95 inviting us to worship: “Come, let’s sing for joy to the Lord, Let’s shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let’s come before His presence with a song of thanksgiving. Let’s shout joyfully to Him in songs with instruments.”
 - b. Usually there is at least one ‘anchor song’ that shares a similar theme to the message
 - c. Choose songs by theme, not by exact topic
 - a. Most times, an exact topic cannot be captured in a song (e.g. tithing to the church, relationships, etc.)
 - b. Instead, we work with themes that are present in the teaching.
 - a. What does this show about the character of God? E.g. Sing about his generosity, faithfulness, love

b. What does God want for me? E.g. God wants all things for my good, God wants to conform me to Christ's image, God wants an obedient heart

d. Must be Christ-centered

a. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you..." (Col. 3:15)

b. "Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Col. 3:17)

c. "The God of the Bible loves musical worship. It is our delight to praise him as his redeemed people. Through Paul, he has commanded us to make use of this means to teach & admonish one another, such that his people are full of the word of Christ." – Barry Joslin

e. Recognizes God's status and our own

a. God is exalted on high; he is blessed in our singing

b. Rightful understanding of our condition; we are broken & fall short of God's glory; we need repentance; but we are also children of God, welcomed by God

7. Closing thoughts

a. Worship is ascribing ultimate worth to our God

b. God seeks our worship

c. Singing has a special place in God's heart

- "Our singing isn't something we originate, but flows from the relationships of the triune God who sings: (Zeph. 3:17: '*The Lord your God...will delight in you with singing.*' Heb. 2:11-12: 'Jesus is not ashamed to call [us] brothers & sisters, saying: I'll proclaim your name to my brothers & sisters; *I'll sing hymns to You [i.e., God the Father] in the congregation.*') We sing because God sings and we've been made in his image." – Bob Kauflin i. It is the command most repeated in the Bible

a. The Psalms were written for congregational worship

b. Singing will continue in eternity future

d. Singing is also beneficial for teaching

a. Teaching the congregation

b. Teaching our children

c. Teaching those not familiar with God

e. If God places such a high importance on singing, we should too

a. Prepare our hearts for worship beforehand (we have limited time)

b. Be on time

c. Sing throughout the week (You tube, Spotify, CDs, instrumentals)

d. Learn new songs in various styles. Barry Joslin suggests the following (traditional & contemporary): "songs such as J.Wesley's "*And Can it Be?*," M. Luther's "*A Mighty Fortress*," John Newton's "*Amazing Grace*," Isaac Watts' "*Jesus Shall Reign*," Keith & Kristyn Getty's "*Communion Hymn*," "*By Faith*," & "*In Christ Alone*," Gateway Worship's "*God Be Praised*" & "*O the Blood*," Hillsong's "*Cornerstone*" & "*Beneath the Waters*," [etc.]"

e. Have a thankful heart for all that God has done for you

QUESTIONS: Read Eph. 5:18b-20 and Col. 3:16-17. These 'sister verses,' suggest that 'being Spirit-filled' & 'Letting Christ's word indwell us' are 'two sides of one coin.' Based on this understanding:

1. Eph 5 says "speaking...in psalms & hymns & spiritual songs," Col 3 also refers to "psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs." How does Col. 3 help us know what kind of "speaking" this should be? What should be the content of our "speaking"?
2. "Psalms & hymns & spiritual songs" are obviously for singing; according to Col. 3:16 what other purposes do they have?
3. We tend to separate worship in songs from the 'ministry of the word' (messages). How does Col. 3:16 change that view?
4. During the past week (or two) which hymn or song has helped you touch the Lord/be Spirit-filled? Name the song. What elements of that song/hymn have (a.) taught you something about God/Christ/salvation? (b.) have encouraged you? Explain