

Sound Worship : Personal Study Companion

This companion is designed to accompany *Sound Worship: a Guide to Making Musical Choices in a Noisy World* by Scott Aniol (Religious Affections Ministries, 2010). The companion is divided according to the chapter and subject divisions within the book and includes 14,000 additional words of explanation, research, discussion, and application. We suggest that you follow along with this companion, answering the questions as you progress through each chapter.

Introduction

Begin by considering your expectations for this study. What do you hope to accomplish? What are some questions you have that you'd like answered? What are some issues you're facing in your life or your church that you hope this study will help you with?

Relativism

A symptom of Postmodernism that teaches that there is no transcendent, absolute truth. No Christian can believe this fully, but many Christians do deny absolutes in areas that are not explicitly addressed in Scripture. This claim is examined fully in Chapter 2.

Individualism

Promotes self-reliance and self-dependence. Christians evidence individualism when they insist that unless they can determine or understand something themselves, they will not believe it. Individualism encourages a general distrust in authority or "experts" as well. This vice is especially prevalent in America.

Pragmatism

Promotes the idea that the ends justify the means. The fact that something works proves its validity and worth. This is especially prevalent in the Church Growth Movement.

In what areas of your life do you find making musical choices difficult? Do you find that it is easier to make choices regarding sacred or secular music? Upon what criteria do you make your choices?

Chapter 1: Does Music Matter?

Chapter Motivation

This chapter sets the tone for the entire study. If Christians don't see the importance of music for the Christian life or the glory of God, then they won't have open minds and hearts to listen to principles set forth in the book. This chapter demonstrates the biblical importance of music.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 5:19

“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (ESV).

Introduction (p. 5)

Do you think that music matters? Do you think God cares what kind of music you listen to at home? Do you think God cares about the music that is used in church? How has a kind of thinking that says that music doesn't matter influenced secular society today? How has it influenced Christian practice?

Music Matters Scripturally (pp. 6—13)

Music In Worship (pp. 6—9)

Theocracy

“From *theos*, ‘God,’ and *kratein*, ‘to rule,’ it means ‘rule by God’ and describes the control of Israel's national affairs by the Lord as their supreme lawgiver and ruler. Unlike any other form of government, theocracy gives the absolute authority of God to every law He revealed to control and direct all personal and public morality in both religious and social life” (Alan Cairnes, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* [Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald, 1998], 403).

1 Chronicles 23:5

Some translations quote David as saying “that I have made for praise,” while others say “that God has made for praise.” Either way God is in view here since David was God's anointed servant and spokesman.

Why do you suppose God gave such specific instructions to Temple musicians? Do we place as important an emphasis upon the qualifications for worship musicians today as the Israelites did? Should we place as much emphasis on that as they did? Do you think principles from some of the commands to Temple musicians should be carried over for New Testament Church musicians?

Ephesians 5:19

“Singing” is from *ado*, which means to sing with the voice.

“Making melody” is from *psallo*, which literally means to pluck on a stringed instrument, like a harp. It is related to the term from which we get *psalm*, and in its broader use can refer to making any instrumental music.

Does the connection of music with worship in the Bible provide adequate proof that music is important to God? How does such a connection impact the kinds of choices we make for worship music?

Music and Truth (pp. 9–10)

What is it about music that makes it such a wonderful vehicle for communicating God’s truth? How does truth presented in song differ from truth presented through speaking? Drama? Books?

Music and Emotion (p. 11)

Saul and David

This account will be explained more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

James 5:13

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.”

Colossians 3:16

The KJV and NASB better reflect this interpretation of Colossians 3:16 than other translations. See David F. Detwiler, “Church Music and Colossians 3:16,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158, 631 (July 2001), 358: “To assign these datives [“psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”] to ‘singing’ would create an overload of qualifying statements and destroy the symmetry of the two participial clauses. Also to assign them to ‘teaching and admonishing’ is consistent with the unambiguous parallel of Ephesians 5:19.”

Have you ever had your emotions changed by music? Was that change positive or negative? Have you ever used a song to express a sentiment that you couldn’t find words to express?

Five horizontal blue lines for writing.

Why do you think certain styles of music are always associated with sinful lifestyles and practices? Is there something about the emotional expression that automatically promotes those associations?

Five horizontal blue lines for writing.

Music and Beauty (p. 12)

The Glory of God

“But the ascription of glory to God should be seen as a response to the glory that is inherent in his being. Before our recognition and praise, God is in himself all glory in a sublime conjunction of beauty, truth and love. This glory is majestic. It brings wonder and awe and worship” (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 54).

Psalms 19:1

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

Romans 1:20

“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

Define God's glory.

Have you ever connected the idea of God's glory with our modern concept of beauty? In what ways does creation "declare the glory of God" and make God's "invisible attributes" known?

Music Matters Historically (pp. 13—17)

How important is church history to you? What do pastors and theologians of the past contribute to this question of whether music matters?

Basil of Caesarea (p. 13)

Basil of Caesarea

Basil was an influential 4th century Christian theologian. He was a supporter of the Nicene faction of the church, which opposed Arianism, a teaching that denied the deity of Christ.

What are the primary benefits of music (psalms) according to Basil of Caesarea?

Ambrose (p. 14)

Ambrose of Milan

Ambrose was a bishop of Milan in the 4th century. He is considered the Father of Latin hymnody for his introduction of metrical hymnody into church services. Many later hymns from the sixth century were thought to be by him, or at least in his spirit, so they are called “Ambrosian.” By tradition, he is said to have introduced antiphonal or responsive singing in Milan, and he may have been the first in Italy to encourage general congregational singing.

How does Ambrose highlight both the horizontal and vertical benefits of music?

John Chrysostom (p. 14)

John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom was an important Early Church Father. He is famous for eloquence in public speaking and his denunciation of abuse of authority in the Church and in the Roman Empire of the time. He rejected the contemporary trend for allegory, instead speaking plainly and applying Bible passages and lessons to everyday life.

What are some ways that music could “harm” or “ruin” as John Chrysostom suggests? What are characteristics of music that would cause such effects?

Augustine (p. 15)

Augustine

Augustine is considered by Evangelical Protestants to be in the tradition of the Apostle Paul as the theological fountainhead of the Reformation teaching on salvation and grace.

How does Augustine say that music can give expression to affections that cannot be spoken. We’ll discuss this more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

Martin Luther (p. 15)

Martin Luther

Luther was a German theologian who sparked the Protestant Reformation. His writings had significant influence upon the development of Protestant doctrine, and his hymns inspired the development of congregational singing in Christianity.

What do you think Luther meant by “properly used”? How can we be made “better and stronger in faith” by music?

John Calvin (p. 16)

John Calvin

Calvin was a French pastor who, along with Luther, was one of the most significant theologians of the Protestant Reformation. He also had significant impact upon worship in Western Christianity, particularly in the development of the Regulative Principle of Worship (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the RPW).

How can music help us to “invoke and praise God with more vehement and ardent zeal”?

What characteristics would make a song “light” or “frivolous”?

What are differences between “music which one makes to entertain men” and music “sung in the Church”?

How can we “abuse” God’s gift of music?

Jonathan Edwards (p. 17)

Jonathan Edwards

Edwards was a Puritan theologian and pastor, and one of the most significant figures of the American Great Awakening (1730s–1740s).

What do you think Edwards meant by “sweet concord of mind”?

Conclusion (p. 17)

Why do you think people have begun to assume that music is unimportant in the 20th and 21st centuries?

Further Reading

Read Chapter 5 of *Worship in Song* (Aniol, BMH, 2010; hereafter “WIS.”) for a thorough discussion of the cultural development of music. The chapter will help further explain why we view music as we do today.

Chapter Review

Does music matter? How much does music matter? In what ways does it matter?

Do our secular music choices matter as much as our sacred choices? In what ways?

In what ways has your thinking been changed because of this chapter?

What issues in this chapter do you hope to get a better grasp of in the remainder of the book?

Chapter 2: Is the Bible Enough?

Chapter Motivation

Many people today insist that since the Bible does not discuss musical style at any length, then it must be unimportant to God. This chapter explains that a correct understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture demands that a Christian must submit all of his choices to the authority and profitability of God's Word.

Memory Verse

2 Timothy 3:16–17

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (ESV).

Introduction (p. 19)

What is your authority when it comes to making musical choices?

Do you think God has given us any instruction in the Bible for making musical choices that please him?

How much do you think we can/should use extra-biblical sources of information as we make ethical decisions, including our musical choices?

The Bible Is Sufficient (pp. 20–32)

What do you think the sufficiency of Scripture means? Do you believe that God has given us everything we need in his Word?

Sola Scriptura

The doctrine of the sole sufficiency of Scripture was one of the hallmark doctrines of the Protestant Reformation along with *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), *Sola Fide* (faith alone), *Sola Gratia* (grace alone), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (the glory of God alone).

“The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended for his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 127).

“The Reformation irrevocably stated its theological claims upon a totally reliable, perspicuous Bible; it explicitly denied the notion of a living Magisterium as interpreter of Scripture. Indeed, the Reformers categorically refused to allow any human writing or teacher to stand above Holy Writ; they recognized fully well that if God’s Word were not entirely trustworthy, then man would be forever incapable of distinguishing its truth from its non-truth and even the salvatory Gospel would be imperiled” (John Warwick Montgomery, “The Approach of New Shape Roman Catholicism to Scriptural Inerrancy: A Case Study for Evangelicals,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 10, 4 [Fall 1967], 222).

The Bible is Sufficient for Salvation (p. 21)

Regeneration

At the moment of salvation, God supernaturally implants new life into spiritually dead people (Eph. 2:1–5; Col. 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3, 23). This “new birth” is the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit (John 1:13; 3:8), but he uses the Word of God in a person’s life (see below).

Romans 10:14–17

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

Luke 10:25–26

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ ²⁶He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’”

Do we need anything beside the Word of God to lead us to salvation? Can anyone be saved apart from the Word of God?

The Bible is Sufficient for Sanctification (pp. 22–24)

Are you committed to daily, progressive sanctification, aided by the Holy Spirit through his Word? Do you think your musical choices are part of sanctification?

Luke 16:27—29

“And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—²⁸for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’²⁹But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’”

Sanctification

“The sanctification of believers consists in the purification of the pollution of sin and the renovation of their nature after the image of God” (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 35). The process of sanctification begins at the moment of conversion and continues until a believer is glorified.

Perfectly Equipped

Literally *artion exartizo*. Both terms come from the Greek term *artios*, meaning “fitted, complete, perfect.” Put together, they intensify the significance of the fact that the Bible is enough.

What do you think “perfectly equipped” implies?

Inspiration

Protestant Christians believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. This means that inspiration extends to every word of the text of Scripture and that it is inspired and infallible in all its parts. The Bible *is* the Word of God; it does not merely *contain* it.

Inerrancy & Authority

“The inerrancy of Scripture and the authority of Scripture are like Siamese twins—they are inseparably joined to each other. Holy Scripture, being God’s law and testimony, is true and should therefore serve as our standard for all matters of faith and practice (Isa. 8:19-20). God’s Word, being both truthful (John 17:17) and authoritative, calls us to humble and faithful obedience in every area of which it speaks. There is no authority that is higher than that in Scripture. Wherever and on whatever subject the Scriptures speak, one must regard them as both inerrant and authoritative” (Wayne A. Mack, “The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 9, 1 [Spring 1998], 63–64).

Why does the inspiration of Scripture imply the inerrancy and authority of Scripture? How can we practically deny the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible by how we live?

Profitable

ōphelimos – beneficial, useful, valuable, value, profitable, profit

Sufficiency

Martin Luther: “There is no higher authority in the church than God’s Word, specifically on doctrines and teaching.” (Eugene F. Klug, “Word and Scripture in Luther Studies Since World War II,” *Trinity Journal* 5, 1 [Spring 1984], 3).

Teaching

didaskalia – doctrine

Reproof

elegmos – that which is to be proved or tested

Correction

epanorthōsis – restoration to an upright or right state; improvement of life or character

Training

paideia – instruction which aims at increasing virtue

What kinds of things in your life is the Bible sufficient to inform and instruct? What kinds of things in your life do you sometimes wonder if the Bible is really enough?

Do you really believe that the Bible is enough to help you make all of the choices in your life? Discuss the challenges to being confident in this truth.

What the Sufficiency of Scripture Does Not Mean (pp. 25–32)

Biblical Application

“Generally, approaches to the Bible’s applicability to life fall into two categories. Some deny that the Bible can be applied to contemporary moral situations with any real authority, and yet others insist that as long as the Bible is interpreted and applied correctly, authoritative ethical standards may be formulated even for issues not explicitly addressed in Scripture” (*WIS*, 4).

What are some contemporary situations that are not explicitly addressed in Scripture? Does the fact that something is not directly addressed mean that it is not important to God?

Encompassing View

“[Some] argue that the Bible applies to all contemporary ethical situations, and authoritative standards may be formulated with issues not found in the Bible. Such standards may be derived from proper application to equivalent situations” (WIS, 5–6).

“When there is no exact modern equivalent to some aspect of a command (such as, ‘honor the emperor’ in 1 Peter 2:17), then we are still obligated to obey the command, but we do so by applying it to situations that are essentially similar to the one found in the NT. Therefore, ‘honor the emperor’ is applied to honoring the president or the prime minister. In fact, in several such cases the immediate context contains pointers to broader applications (such as 1 Peter 2:13-14, which mentions being subject to ‘every human institution’ including the ‘emperor’ and ‘governors’ as specific examples)” (Wayne Grudem, “Review Article: Should We Move Beyond the New Testament to a Better Ethic?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, 2 [June 2004], 302-303).

Encyclopedic View

“Some argue that if the Bible does not address a particular moral issue, believers have complete liberty to do as they please. In other words, absence of biblical directive implies moral neutrality. If God had an opinion on a particular issue, they argue, He would have given His people instructions. Rather, morally neutral actions matter only with regard to the subjective motive or conscience of the individual” (WIS, 4).

“Any specified list in Scripture is to be obeyed without hesitation or question. That’s an inspired list for all of us to follow, not someone’s personal list. . . . But when questionable things aren’t specified in Scripture, it then becomes a matter of one’s personal preference or convictions” (Charles R. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990], 132).

“Such individuals argue that this position is a correct and consistent application of Sola Scriptura. Belief that the Bible is sufficient for faith and practice implies that God has given His people instructions in every area He considers morally important. . . . Since believers are not given explicit instruction in certain areas, and since they are not supplied with an explicit process for applying the Bible to contemporary situations, such issues must be morally neutral” (WIS, 5).

What are ways in which the Bible could be viewed as a list or encyclopedia of prohibitions? Have you ever heard people talk about biblical application in this way?

Which Way?

“Those who promote the encyclopedic view of Scripture in terms of its applicability fail to understand several key principles with regard to Sola Scriptura and the Bible’s own example of moral application. . . . First, it is important to recognize that the formulators of the principle of Sola Scriptura never intended it to be applied in the manner of the encyclopedic view. For instance, consider these lines from Article VI of the Westminster Confession of Faith: ‘The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.’

Defenders of Sola Scriptura in the past realized that God intends all believers to deduce principles from His Word and apply them to every area of practice. What Luther and the other Reformers intended with Sola Scriptura is that the Bible must be the supreme authority for the Christian, not that it will be the only source of information utilized in the application of its authoritative principles. They recognized the necessity of using common sense and reason to apply Scripture’s principles to life” (WIS, 7).

What are some acts that are not directly mentioned in Galatians 5:19–21 but are “like” those in the list.

Summarize the two different ways of interpreting Sola Scriptura, and consider which one really limits the profitability of the Bible.

Fully Equipped

“Paul expected his readers to exercise intelligence and discernment in determining additional attitudes, activities, and behaviors that were similar to these. . . .

“Even if this already representative inventory of fifteen vices were omitted from Scripture, we would still be able to identify these behaviors as sinful, for they are ‘obvious’” (John Makujina, “Forgotten Texts and Doctrines in Current Evangelical Responses to Culture,” presented at the East Region Annual Conference of The Evangelical Theological Society, March 26, 2004, 4).

“Indeed, the mature advance beyond the basic teachings of the Christian faith—both doctrinal and moral—and are able to use them to make comparisons, weigh evidences, detect similarities, identify and apply principles, discern intentions, navigate through the complexities of culture-specific activities, and draw more sophisticated conclusions on the appropriateness of various behaviors and customs. But the immature are restricted to the basic teachings of right and wrong available in special revelation” (Makujina, 6).

Biblical Application

The Bible is not something we look at to apply it; the Bible is something we look *through*.

How can Christians train their “powers of discernment”? What are some ways they can “practice to distinguish good from evil”?

Authority/Information

“Those who favor the encyclopedic view and are afraid that such interaction with extrabiblical information endangers the doctrine of Sola Scriptura must remember that the doctrine refers to authority and not to information. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says that the Scripture is profitable for all of life, but it does not prohibit the use of additional information to understand the issue over which the believer is attempting to apply the Bible’s authority” (WIS, 16).

What are some extrabiblical sources of information that may be helpful in discerning how a Christian should live? What are some extrabiblical tools that could help a Christian make God-pleasing musical decisions?

Test Case

“To arrive at the conclusion that abortion is morally wrong, conservative Christians—even those who hold strictly to an encyclopedic view of biblical application—must use implication, extrapolation, and consult extrabiblical information to arrive at their conclusion. The biblical principle is clear: Killing an innocent human being is sin (Ex. 20:13). But in order to bridge the gap between that principle and the conclusion that abortion is morally evil, one must employ the second step in correct application, which involves information other than explicit statements from the Bible. . . .

In other words, abortion, like music, is a contemporary moral issue about which the Bible has no explicit instruction. Using sound logic and possibly extrabiblical data, a believer should come to the conclusion that unborn infants are human beings. That information combined with the universal moral principle that murder is sin should drive him to an authoritative moral principle that killing unborn infants is sin. This is the process that should be employed with all contemporary moral issues, including what music is appropriate for Christians” (WIS, 17–19).

Consider the issue of abortion. Is it directly condemned in Scripture? What are some evidences in the Bible that prove that abortion is sin?

Consider the recreational use of cocaine. What are some principles in the Bible that would rightly lead a Christian to believe that such practice is sin? Do you need any extra-biblical information to arrive at that conclusion?

Training in Application (pp. 32—36)

Active Sanctification

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:9-11).

“And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any- one has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Col. 3:10-14).

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:17-18).

Do you find yourself sometimes lazy when it comes to pursuing godliness and pursuing things that are excellent? What can you do practically to prevent this?

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Method of Application

1. Principlize – “To ‘principlize’ is to state an author’s propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church. Contemporary applications will often be suggested by analogous applications made by the original writer of the Biblical text” (Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981]) 152).

2. Consider Extrabiblical Information – “Before we can properly apply any biblical statement to our culture or another, we must seek a deeper understanding of the specific cultural environment” (Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd Ed. [Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2006], 454).

3. Apply – “What would the original author say to contemporary situations” (Osborne, 441)?

Choose several contemporary issues and use the three step process of biblical application listed above to arrive at biblical conclusions.

Five horizontal blue lines for writing.

Decision Principles

from 1 Corinthians 8–10

1. Is it beneficial for sanctification? (10:23–24)
2. Does it risk failing to bring God glory? (10:31)
3. Does it offend others? (8:9; 10:32–33)
4. Does it control me? (6:12)

Are you willing to work in order to understand all of the important issues related to music and worship so that you can make God-pleasing decisions in this area?

Applying the Bible to Musical Choices (pp. 36–37)

Levels of Authority

“The respective level of authority in applications derived from implication or extrabiblical information depends upon three factors. First, those applications more closely connected to the original intent of a text carry more authority than others. . . . Second, applications may be considered authoritative only when they come from implications soundly derived from a text. Third, an application may be considered authoritative only when extrabiblical information about that given issue has been correctly understood. An ethical standard is as authoritative as explicit biblical commands when that standard is rightly understood as a sound application of a biblical, universal moral principle to a contemporary situation” (WIS, 20).

We will discuss this more fully in Chapter 4, but begin to consider some biblical principles that may have bearing upon musical choices.

If an extrabiblical source of information contradicts the Bible, which source of authority wins? Consider some scenarios where this might happen.

Further Reading

Read Chapter 1 of *WIS* for a thorough discussion biblical authority and application.

Read Chapter 3 of *WIS* for a discussion of active, progressive sanctification.

Chapter Review

Is the Bible really enough to help us make God-pleasing musical choices?

What principles in Scripture should we apply to our musical choices?

What other sources of information might help us make good choices?

Chapter 3: Why Do We Sing in Church?

Chapter Motivation

Most Christians today limit the benefit of music to its power to accompany truth. While this is certainly an important benefit (see Chapter 1), music has a far more important role in worship.

Memory Verse

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” (NASB).

Introduction (p. 39—40)

How would you define worship? Why do you think we sing in church?

What is Worship?

“Worship is the work of acknowledging the greatness of our covenant Lord” (John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1996], 1).

“Worship is the believers’ response of all that they are—mind, emotions, will, and body—to what God is and says and does” (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 26).

“To worship Jesus Christ is to attribute worth to Him” (Joseph S. Carroll, *How To Worship Jesus Christ* [Chicago: Moody, 1984], 36).

“The worship of the church, then, consists of individual, corporate, public, and private service for the Lord which is generated by a reverence for a submission to Him who is totally worthy” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* [Wheaton: Victor, 1988], 428).

“Worship is to feel in the heart . . . Real worship is, among other things, a feeling about the Lord our God” (A. W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship?* [Camp Hill, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1985], 82).

“Worship is our innermost being responding with praise for all that God is, through our attitudes, actions, thoughts, and words, based on the truth of God as He has revealed Himself “ (John MacArthur Jr., *The Ultimate Priority* [Chicago: Moody, 1983], 127).

What are some ways in which an understanding of music in church as only accompaniment for truth might influence philosophy and musical choices? Could such thinking influence a church to make bad decisions?

What is Worship? (pp. 40—49)

Worship Defined

“Worship is a spiritual response to God as a result of understanding biblical truth about God. This definition captures the biblical essence of worship and can be expressed in countless ways through actions, attitudes, and affections (WIS, 30).

OT vs. NT Worship

Old Testament Jews were like children; they needed the physical sensation to learn about God; they needed the sensory experience. But as New Testament Christians with the Word of God in our possession, we are no longer children; we no longer need the physical. We worship God now purely spiritually; purely immaterially.

How has worship changed from the Old Testament to the New? What are some similarities? Does this have implications for the essence of what worship is?

Worship In Truth (pp. 42—44)

Worship in Truth

God alone has the prerogative to tell us how we should worship him. This principle has come to be called the Regulative Principle of Worship. It is based upon the following Scriptural emphases:

- The Sufficiency of Scripture
- God Rejects Worship That He Has Not Prescribed
- Limits of the Church’s Authority
- Liberty of Conscience

Traditionally, the Regulative Principle of Worship has been divided into four general categories to explain its application:

- The **substance** of worship must be explicitly prescribed in the Word of God.
- The **elements** of worship must be found clearly articulated in the New Testament.
- The **forms** we use must be governed by principles and examples in Scripture.
- The **circumstances** of our worship must be in accordance with Christian prudence, according to the principles of Scripture.

The Regulative Principle of Worship was historically an important distinctive of Presbyterians and Baptists especially. Unfortunately, however, churches today have lost an understanding of this biblical doctrine, and have introduced elements into public worship that are merely commandments of men.

Notice how God rejects creative worship in Exodus 32:1–10, Leviticus 10:1–3, and Matthew 15:8–9.

Biblical Elements

- 1. Reading the Word
“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13).
- 2. Preaching the Word
“Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2).
- 3. Singing
“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16).
- 4. Prayer
“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Timothy 2:1).
- 5. Ordinances
“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11).
- 6. Giving
“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come” (2 Corinthians 16:2).

What are some elements that churches have introduced into their worship that are not prescribed in the Word of God? Explain how such introductions contradict worship in truth.

Worship in Truth

“For worship to be directed to God, the worshiper must understand the truth about God. That is why the preaching of God’s Word should be central in a worship service. It is why a believer must be studying the Word of God if he is to worship God with all of his life. Without understanding God, a person cannot worship Him.

God is known in two ways—by His character and by His works. Both are necessary in a presentation of truth about God. God’s character consists of attributes that describe Him such as holiness, sovereignty, power, love, faithfulness, justice, righteousness, grace, and mercy. God’s works are those things He has done to display His character. The scriptural examples above clearly indicate that God is being worshiped because of truth rooted in Himself, either who He is or what He has done. Only when God’s character and works are seen can He truly be worshiped in a biblical way. . . .

It is not enough for worshipers to observe truth about God. They must also understand that truth. An understanding of truth includes the truth itself and all its implications for us. God means for His people to see and acknowledge His truth. That will often require careful teaching and explanation of the biblical text. Commentaries and other resources can help someone in his personal understanding, while the local church pastor provides weekly exegesis for his people” (WIS, 31–32).

Explain why the content of our church music is so important. Name and evaluate some sacred songs that have weak doctrinal content.

Name and evaluate some popular Christian songs that actually contradict biblical doctrine in their lyrics.

Worship In Sprit (pp. 44—47)

Worship In Sprit

“In modern thought, emotion is generally considered neutral. The only criterion of worth for emotion is the object toward which it is expressed. This relatively novel thinking, however, must be corrected to distinguish between different qualities of emotion. Not all emotion is created equal, especially for expression to God. A man should not love his wife in the same way that he loves his dog. Additionally, there is a great difference between emotion that is merely physical feeling and emotion that involves the whole of man. Well-known theologian Jonathan Edwards differentiated between ‘passions’ and ‘affections’ in his treatise, *Religious Affections*:

‘The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same, and yet in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference. Affection is a word that in the ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination, but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more over powered, and less in its own command.

The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul” (WIS, 52).

What do you think of when you hear the term, “emotion”? What do you think of when you hear the term, “affections”?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of ten horizontal blue lines.

“Edwards’ thinking reflects anthropological thought prior to the Enlightenment. Modern thinking sees man as comprised of mind, will, and emotion. Pre-modern thought, however, understood a distinction within the category of emotion between the affections and the passions, the former being a component of the will and the latter simply part of man’s physiology.

‘Passions’ are surface-level feelings that are merely physical, chemical responses to some sort of stimulus. Blushing when embarrassed, experiencing ‘butterflies’ in your stomach, or ‘goose bumps’ are examples of such passionate responses. Passions include things like fear, anger, sentimental-ism, sexual drive, and appetite. They are not wrong, but they are not the measure of true spiritual response to truth and should never be allowed to control us. Whenever a person is controlled by his gut, his passions, he will fail to do what is right. A man controlled by his appetite is a glutton. One controlled by anger finds himself with an uncontrollable temper. A person who allows his sexual drive to control him will fail morally.

‘Affections,’ on the other hand, involve the mind. They arise as a result of some sort of cognitive understanding of truth. They are not immediate but developed. They are not merely surface level physical responses; they support the intellect. Affections are so important to develop because we need noble affections to keep our passions in check. Without biblical affections, passions will always win over the mind ” (WIS, 52–53).

Explain the difference between feelings that may accompany affections and feelings that are simply artificially stimulated. What are some common ways to stimulate feelings? How might personality affect a person's feelings?

Choose an affection and list a variety of feelings that may accompany it.

Feelings

Throughout the history of the Church, Christians have always been tempted to follow after more physical, more sensory forms of worship. This is only natural – we are physical beings, and we can't see God, so we really want to experience Him physically. When people worship, they really want to feel something. They want to experience something. They want to “encounter” God. They want something physical. We naturally want to be able to point to something, whether it is a mountain or a ceremony or a tradition or a ritual or a feeling, and say, “That's worship.” But when you desire some kind of physical experience in worship, you are desiring Law, not Grace. Law is physical; grace is spiritual. You are desiring the kind of worship that existed before people could actually approach God themselves.

Have you ever thought in your heart, “I just don't feel like I'm worshipping,” or “I need that song or that ceremony or that element in a service in order to feel like I'm really worshipping”? Why does there seem to be a temptation to define spiritual experiences such as worship by some kind of physical criteria in most people's experiences?

Facilitating Worship in Spirit and Truth (pp. 48—49)

What are different elements in a worship service that facilitate worship in truth?

Religious Affections

“Biblical affection comes from the affirmation of right biblical truths, and it results in right actions. Without right beliefs there would be no right affection, but without right affection there would be no right action” (WIS, 54).

Discuss various life circumstances in which words are inadequate to express what is happening in the heart.

The Language of our Spirits (pp. 49—53)

Expressing our Spirits (50—51)

Ephesians 5:19

“Singing” is from *ado*, which means to sing with the voice.

“Making melody” is from *psallo*, which literally means to pluck on a stringed instrument, like a harp. It is related to the term from which we get *psalm*, and in its broader use can refer to making any instrumental music.

Consider how music expresses the heart. List some other passages of Scripture that emphasize the heart focus and power of music.

Expressing Emotion

Martin Luther: “When you are sad, say to yourself, ‘Come! I will strike up a song to my Lord Jesus Christ on the regal, be it Te Deum Laudamus or Benedictus, for the Scriptures teach me that He rejoices in glad song and the sound of strings.’ So with renewed spirit reach for the claves and sing until your sad thoughts are driven away, as did David and Elisha.”

How can instrumental music without words express different kinds of emotion? Name some instrumental music that expresses joy, love, peace, or excitement.

Name five songs that express joy, and discuss how they express different kinds of joy.

Teaching our Spirits (52–53)

Sanctifying Emotion

“In Martin Luther we find perhaps the clearest articulation of how good music can sanctify. Luther knew that words alone were deficient as emotional enrichment; he needed music to encourage true piety and religious fervor. He believed that ‘notes bring the text to life.’ Here he interprets Platonic thought through the eyes of Scripture and forms a basis for a theological philosophy of music. Since music can enhance the emotions and ennoble the soul, it can—when united with sound theology—provide adequate means for expressing right piety for God. ‘After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming it through music and by providing sweet melodies with words’” (WIS, 129).

List some ways people exhibit wrong emotions. List some ways that Christians exhibit unsanctified emotions.

Sanctifying Emotion

“A Christian is constantly aware of his need to be improved and seeks, through the power of God in accordance with His Word, to progress further toward purity. The pursuit of purity includes the realm of his mind (his ability to distinguish truth from error and believe only in what is true), his will (his ability to discern right from wrong and act accordingly), and his emotions (his ability to apprehend rightly and to delight in the beauty of God)” (WIS, 122).

Guard the Affections

“It is of utmost importance, therefore, that we carefully guard what shapes our affections. This is a dire need in contemporary evangelicalism. . . . Things that shape and govern our affections surround us: music, movies, books—all of culture molds and guides our affections. That is the whole purpose of music; music is the language of emotions. So what we listen to and those cultural activities we digest shape and form our affections either rightly or wrongly. And for this reason we must be very careful what we allow to shape our affections” (WIS, 56).

What are you allowing in your life to shape your affections? Are you filling your life with things that debase your affections or things that ennoble them?

What kinds of music might harm a person’s affections? What kinds of music might help them?

Conclusion (pp. 54—55)

Implications

1. Setting the philosophy of music for a church falls under the responsibility of pastoral authority.
2. Active participation in the singing of the church is not optional.
3. Only music that expresses emotions that are appropriate for worship should be used in worship.
4. All of our musical choices matter, because all music shapes our affections.

Consider the implications listed in the conclusion. Do you have to adjust your thinking to match any of them? Are there areas where you can adjust your practice to apply some of them?

What kinds of music are inappropriate for church because they express emotions that are inappropriate to direct toward God?

Further Reading

Read Chapter 2 of *WIS* for a full study of the definition of worship in Scripture.

Read Chapter 4 of *WIS* for a detailed discussion of the importance of the affections and the difference between passions and affections.

Read Chapter 8 of *WIS* for a discussion of the sanctifying power of music.

Read Chapter 11 of *WIS* for a more thorough discussion of why we need sacred music.

Read Chapter 14 of *WIS* for a discussion of affection-oriented worship.

Read Chapter 16 of *WIS* for an explanation of different kinds of similar emotions expressed in music.

Chapter Review

Define worship biblically.

What are the primary purposes of music for worship?

How can music express our hearts?

How can music sanctify our emotions?

What kind of music is inappropriate for worship?

What kind of music is inappropriate for Christians at any time?

Chapter 4: How Can We Evaluate Musical Communication?

Chapter Motivation

Christians may admit that they need to be discerning with their musical choices, but determining what music communicates and rightly applying the Bible to those choices is not always simple. This chapter aims at simply explaining how to apply the Bible to music.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 4:29

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (ESV).

Introduction (p. 57)

Do you have a difficult time discerning what various songs and style communicate? Consider some of the various reasons discerning musical meaning can be difficult.

Musical Communication In the Bible (pp. 57—61)

Worship that Sounds Like War (pp. 58)

Exodus 32

People often assume that the children of Israel were attempting to worship a pagan god in this instance. However, closer examination will show that they were simply trying to worship Yahweh using means He had not prescribed.

In verse 1 the people say, “Come, make us [*Elohim*] . . .” The same term is used in verse 4 when they say, “These are [this is] *Elohim*, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” Translators render this word, *elohim*, as “gods,” because it is a plural reference to deity, and because they assume the people of Israel are seeking to worship other gods. However notice what Aaron says in verse 5: “Tomorrow shall be a feast to [*Yahweh*].” There is no doubt here that the people were attempting worship Yahweh, who they say brought them up out of Egypt. The name *Elohim* is often used to refer to Yahweh. The plural form signifies majesty and honor. This point is made even clearer when Moses relates this incident in Deuteronomy 9:16:

And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God. You had made yourselves a golden calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you.

Moses says that they sinned against *Yahweh Elohim*.

What are similarities between sounds associated with war and sounds associated with pagan worship rituals? What musical elements may have been part of this music that would have reflected these similar sounds? What kinds of music today might sound like war or pagan worship to average ears?

Refreshing the Spirit (pp. 59–60)

Theocratic Anointing

“In the Old Testament, the theocratic anointing was a special work of the Spirit whereby the leaders of the theocratic kingdom were equipped with special abilities to effectively function in their leadership capacities. The Old Testament describes this ministry of the Spirit as coming upon Moses, the Seventy Elders, Joshua, some of the judges, Saul, David, Solomon, and finally Jesus Christ” (Robert V. McCabe, “Were Old Testament Believers Indwelt by the Spirit?”, *DBSJ* 9 [2004], 230).

This theocratic anointing is probably the “Spirit of the Lord” that left Saul after his disobedience. It is probably the same “Spirit” that David pleads with the Lord not to remove from him in Psalm 51:11. It has nothing to do with losing one’s salvation. In Saul’s case, he was likely an unbeliever, and David was likely a believer, permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

How can music be used to soothe troubled emotions? What musical elements could be used to sooth a trouble emotional state? What kinds of music today would sooth the soul?

Instrumental Emotion (pp. 60–61)

Emotional Metaphor (pp. 61–68)

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech concisely expressed by an implied analogy between two objects or ideas, conveyed by the use of one word instead of another.

A simile is a more narrowed form of metaphor that uses the words “like” or “as.”

Conventional Association (62–63)

Associations

“This level of meaning will matter in our evaluation of music only if one of two things is true. First, if the association is a shadow of intrinsic meaning (discussed below). Though associations do not make music mean something particular, they are sometimes clear indicators of what the music is really saying. For instance, just because a style of music is associated with a bar does not make it wrong for a Christian. But the fact that it is used often in taverns may be a good indication that the music is intrinsically communicating messages that fit with the tavern lifestyle. Likewise, the tune to the national anthem does intrinsically express majesty, which connects easily with pride and patriotism. Examining associations sometimes helps us to determine intrinsic meaning.

The only other reason that association might affect our evaluation of music is if it carries a negative cultural meaning now. In other words, if a certain song or style of music communicates something negative in our current culture—even if that meaning is not intrinsic—it is significant for the Christian” (WIS, 87).

List several conventional associations with music in our culture. How might conventional associations differ from person to person or culture to culture? How might conventional associations change over time?

Musical Styles

Music styles are simply groups of songs that share common characteristics. We could attempt to evaluate every single individual songs we encounter, but style classifications help us make the task easier. Once we have evaluated a few songs in a given style, that usually will help us more quickly evaluate other songs with common characteristics.

Is Music Neutral?

Some people will object that there is nothing moral about notes and rhythms; there is nothing moral about songs. They are merely neutral objects like knives or hammers or guns. How we use them is what matters.

The problem with this kind of argumentation is that it relies on a significant category error. They are right to say that objects are neutral and uses of objects are moral. Anything a human being does is either moral or immoral.

But here’s the important fact: a song is the product of human action! It has already entered the “use” category. Songs don’t exist in a vacuum; they are products of human communication. And any action of a human is either moral or immoral.

Natural Association (pp. 63–68)

Intrinsic Meaning

“The deepest level of meaning is intrinsic. By intrinsic we mean that the very nature of the music carries meaning. The meaning is not because of a text, associations, or culture. The form of the music itself holds meaning. This meaning exists for the same reason we say that certain willow trees ‘weep’ or pug dogs look ‘sad.’ They each resemble emotional characteristics common to mankind. The long droopiness of a weeping willow resembles the physical characteristics of someone who is downtrodden or depressed. The natural curvature of a pug’s mouth resembles a frown. Neither the tree or pug actually possesses emotion, but we describe them in terms of emotion because they resemble the physical characteristics of certain emotions. In a very similar manner, music can carry emotional meaning by resembling the physical characteristics inherently connected with emotion through sound. John Hospers explains the connection between music and human emotion by arguing that music can mimic natural physical expressions of emotion” (WIS, 87–88).

What are some ways in which you can discern the emotional state of a person even if he has not told you? What are some ways in which animals and other non-human objects can be described using emotional language? Why is this possible?

Intrinsic Meaning

“For there are times when we can say that, quite objectively, this expresses that. We can do it with regard to human facial expressions and gestures; this one expresses grief, another expresses perturbation, another jubilation, and so on. We know that this facial configuration expresses grief because when we feel grief we behave so-and-so and have such-and-such facial features. When we feel joy or disturbance we have other facial features. And this is quite objective: everyone recognizes in general what facial features are expressive of what inner states. Tears go with sadness and smiles with gladness, and this is just an objective fact. Anyone who said that furrowed brows and menacing gestures were expressive of joy or relaxation would be wrong. Now, if publicly observable facial features and gestures can be expressive, why cannot publicly observable patterns of sounds or colors also be so” (John Hospers, “Aesthetics, Problems of,” *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics*. [New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967], 164).

“If someone were to insist that a fast sprightly waltz was really sad or melancholy, we would refer him to the behavioral features of sad people and show him that when people are in that state they do exhibit the qualities in question (i.e., the qualities of sad music), rather than speed or sprightliness” (Hospers, 47).

What are some similarities between how gestures, facial expression, and body movements communicate and how music communicates? What are various features of a song that could communicate emotions similarly to how facial features, tone of voice, or body gestures can?

Intrinsic Meaning

“Humans express primary emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, and anger with the same outward, observable manifestations. For instance, humans in any culture at any time are generally slow and downtrodden when they are sad, jittery and tense when they are afraid, and fast and intense when they are angry. In a sense, this is one unified ‘culture of humanity’ of which all people are part. These universals begin to break down when we consider more specific higher emotions such as hope, anxiety, jealousy, or shame, but primary emotions are manifested in the same ways universally. Therefore, when music aurally reflects outward physical manifestations of human emotion, it can be said to express those emotions” (WIS, 88–89).

“Sad music has some of the characteristics of people who are sad. It will be slow, not tripping; it will be low, not tinkling. People who are sad move more slowly, and when they speak, they speak softly and low” (O.K. Bouwsma, “The Expression Theory of Art,” in *Aesthetics and Language*, ed. W. Elton [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952], 99).

“Loud, fast music is arousing, whilst soft, slow music is soothing” (John Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985], 1).

How might natural and conventional meaning contradict one another?

Intrinsic Meaning

“Music that aurally reproduces these universal outward manifestations will universally communicate the primary emotions to which those manifestations are attached. In other words, if a certain piece of music is loud, fast, and intense, it is probably mimicking anger. Now to speak this simplistically is somewhat suspicious. Obviously we cannot narrow a musical composition down to just three moods — music is far more complex. But music uses combinations of melody, tempo, dynamics, rhythm, etc. to reproduce natural human emotional responses. In doing so, it carries intrinsic meaning. And in reality, deep musical examination is not required to discern this meaning. Any observant person knows when music communicates the exact opposite of what someone insists that does” (*WIS*, 89).

“No lullaby will work if yelled jerkily at a brisk rate and no war march will have the desired effect if crooned mellifluously at a snail’s pace” (Philip Tagg, *Fernando the Flute* [Goteborg, Sweden: Gothenberg University, 1981], 186-187).

Choose two songs (one sacred, one secular) and evaluate each of them on three levels: lyrics, conventional associations, and natural associations.

Evaluating Musical Communication (pp. 68—80)

Evaluating Music

“Difficulty arises when we try to nail down exactly what the meaning is. Music does not carry meaning in terms of propositions. However, when we try to evaluate exactly what music is communicating, we must do so in terms of propositional statements: ‘That music means X.’ This is inherently inaccurate because any time we try to summarize the abstract in terms of propositions, we are bound to overstate. It is like trying to summarize how you feel. It cannot always be done with complete accuracy. This provides a difficulty when evaluating music, but it does not imply that we should not still strive to come to conclusions regarding what kinds of meaning are appropriate for believers” (*WIS*, 91).

Why Evaluate?

Songs are products of human creation. They are mediums of human communication. And since humans are totally depraved, there is always the potential that the way a man communicates could be sinful. No part of man escapes the reach of depravity. Not his will, not his actions, not his preferences, not his culture, and certainly not the way he communicates.

What are some challenges to exactly pinpointing what a particular song or style is communicating? Does the difficulty of discerning musical meaning negate the responsibility to do so? Name some other areas in the Christian life that are difficult but necessary.

Corrupt Communication (pp. 69—71)

Corrupt

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not become partners with them” (Ephesians 5:3—7).

“But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.” (Colossians 3:8).

List song songs whose lyrics may not seem corrupt at first, but after carefully comparing them with Scripture most likely are corrupt. Are there any songs that you enjoy whose lyrics contain corrupt communication?

Evaluating Music

“Often unbelievers are more honest about what their music communicates than believers are. For instance, most rock musicians are quick to admit that their music communicates messages such as rebellion and unbridled sexuality:

Heavy metal’s main subject matter is simple and virtually universal. It celebrates teen-agers’ newfound feeling of rebellion and sexuality (Jon Pareles, music critic).

I’ve always thought that the main ingredients in rock are sex, really good stage shows and really sassy music. Sex and sass, I really think that’s where it’s at (Debbie Harry, lead singer of the Blondies).

Rock ‘n’ roll is 99% sex (John Oates of Hall and Oates).

Rock music is sex. The big beat matches the body’s rhythms (Frank Zappa).

The throbbing beat of rock-and-roll provides a vital sexual re- lease for its adolescent audience (Jan Berry of Jan and Dean).

Our music is, and always has been, fueled by a strong sexual undertow. Pop music is partially about sex. The two things can't be divorced (Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys).

Obviously, we must take these very blunt and honest statements into account when we evaluate rock music styles" (WIS, 141–142).

Corrupt Music

"The pulsating rhythms of native African music mimics the restless, superstitious passions of their culture and religion. The music of the Orient is dissonant and unresolved, going from nowhere to nowhere, with no beginning and no end—just as their religions go from cycle to cycle in endless repetitions of meaningless existence. Their music, like their destiny, is without resolution. The music of much of the Western world is the music of seduction and suggestiveness, a musical counterpart of the immoral, lustful society that produces, sings, and enjoys it.

Rock music, with its bombastic atonality and dissonance, is the musical mirror of the hopeless, standardless, purposeless philosophy that rejects both God and reason and floats without orientation in a sea of relativity and unrestrained self-expression. The music has no logical progression because it comes from a philosophy that renounces logic. It violates the brain because its philosophy violates reason. It violates the spirit, because its philosophy violates truth and goodness. And it violates God, because its philosophy violates all authority outside of itself" (John MacArthur, *Ephesians* [Chicago: Moody, 1986], 260–261).

Why is listening to music that expresses corrupt communication a tacit approval of the connected sins? How can listening to corrupt music harm you?

Beneficial?

"With regard to music and any other questionable area in the Christian life, we often ask, 'What's wrong with it?' However, this approach does not fit with a life that is actively pursuing sanctification. Instead, we should be asking, 'What's right with it?' Something may be permissible, but is it really beneficial and edifying for yourself and others? Does it have a positive influence? Is it helping you increase in your sanctification? Is it drawing you closer to God" (WIS, 40)?

Corrupt Music

"Even the texts of many pop songs testify to the fact that certain musical forms are intrinsically sexual. For instance, in the lyrics to 'Turn the Beat Around,' Gerald Jackson and Peter Jackson readily admit that the rhythms encourage sexual movement. Similarly, in 'Rhythm is Gonna Get You,' Gloria Estefan recites the almost hypnotic power of her rhythm. These lyrics are honest about what the music means and what it targets. We would be foolish to ignore them" (WIS, 142).

Honest Questions

"After we have eliminated music that is clearly displeasing to the Lord, we must then ask honest questions about what the music communicates. We must be willing to evaluate the music based upon standards outside ourselves. We must set aside our tastes and preferences and ask, 'What does this music say?' If we find that it communicates messages that are sinful or even hint at sin, we must reject the music. Again, looking at associations and common responses to the music will help" (WIS, 142).

Name and discuss some songs or styles of music that are very likely always inappropriate for Christian use. What do they express? How do they express it? Why is it always inappropriate?

Edifying Communication (pp. 72–73)

What are some kinds of music that may be permissible but are not actually spiritually beneficial?

Fitting Communication (pp. 74–76)

Sentimentalism

“Sentimentality is as rampant in the culture of evangelicalism as it is in popular culture outside the church. Perhaps this is one of the reasons evangelicalism adapted itself to popular culture so readily. The friendliness of it, its lack of ambiguity, its sense of familiarity, its celebrityism—add to these qualities sentimentalism, and one realizes how much the two cultures have in common. But sentimentality may be the most corrupting of these qualities” (Kenneth A. Myers, *All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians & Popular Culture* [Wheaton: Crossway, 1989], 84-85).

Discuss what makes a song fitting for the following occasions:

- a wedding
- a funeral
- a coronation
- a cookout
- a football game
- a church service
- personal worship

The Dish of Culture

One’s philosophy of culture (including music) affects everything, because culture effects everything. Culture is the tangible expression of worldview, and some worldviews are incompatible with biblical doctrine. So one’s philosophy of culture is important because culture affects everything, especially the gospel.

Corporate Worship

“There are other messages that are acceptable in some situations, but are not appropriate in congregational worship or when they are mixed with something sacred. These emotions may be perfectly acceptable for the secular music a Christian enjoys—music about trees and love and family—but they are not appropriate for expression to our holy God. These unacceptable emotions are often slight distortions of emotions that are appropriate (WIS, 208).

How might various cultural expressions, including music, affect the message they are trying to carry?

Stumbling Block

“Does the music offend others? If a particular genre of music causes a significant number of people to stumble, especially if that includes people you know and trust, then that is a good reason to be wary of the music. Paul says in such cases you have the freedom to give up such music” (WIS, 143).

What are some activities that you have freedom to do, but it may be wise to abstain from it since it could cause someone weaker than you to stumble?

Christian Liberty

Christian liberty is not the freedom to do whatever we want as Christians. Christian liberty is the freedom Christians have in Christ to give up things (even “neutral” things) for the sake of others. Unbelievers are constrained to do what they like, but believers can give up even what they like if it will benefit someone else.

What kinds of conventional associations might cause an otherwise good song or style to be a stumbling block for some Christians?

Conclusion (pp. 80—81)

Using the chart on page 80, name a scenario and list some activities that would fit into each box for that scenario:

- Corrupt; avoid at all times
- Edifying, but unfitting for this occasion
- Edifying and fitting, but with a harmful association
- Edifying, fitting, and positive associations

Now choose some scenarios and list some music that would fit into each box in the chart.

Further Reading

Read Chapter 3 of *WIS* for principles for making decisions.

Read Chapter 6 of *WIS* for a detailed explanation of how music communicates.

Read Chapter 9 of *WIS* for criteria for making musical choices.

Read Chapter 16 of *WIS* for criteria for making sacred musical choices, including how to be discerning about appropriateness for worship.

Chapter Review

How does music communicate by conventional associations?

How does music communicate by natural association?

How can music communicate corrupt messages?

How can music communicate edifying messages?

How might some music be unfitting for a particular circumstance?

How might otherwise good music be a stumbling block?

Chapter 5: Is Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder?

Chapter Motivation

Because of rampant relativism today, most people (including Christians) assume that beauty is simply subjective. As Christians, we must root ourselves in the objective source of all things, including beauty – God himself.

Memory Verse

Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (ESV).

Introduction (pp. 83–85)

Define beauty.

Beauty

“The traditional definition comes from a theologian, Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas reasons, ‘the beautiful is something pleasant to apprehend’ (Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas’s Shorter Summa: Saint Thomas’s Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica* [Manchester, N.H.: Sophia Institute Press, 2001], 320). Beauty is what brings pleasure to the observer. Yet something is not beautiful because it brings pleasure; it brings pleasure because it is beautiful. Beauty resides in the properties of an object, not in the subjective opinions of the observer. As Mortimer Adler observes, ‘We call the object beautiful because it has certain properties that make it admirable. It has those properties whether or not its having them results in its being enjoyable by you or me’ (Mortimer Adler, *Six Great Ideas* [New York: Collier Books, 1981], 112) (WIS, 103).

Do you take pleasure in beautiful objects? What kind of pleasure is it? Is it that same kind of pleasure you take in people? Is it the same kind of pleasure you take in a practical tool?

Is Beauty Knowable?

Modernists say everything is either purely objective or subjective (this is where many conservative Christians are). Postmodernists say everything is purely subjective (that's the Emergent Church). And Pre-moderns say that everything is perfectly objective in the mind of God, but mere humans can never fully or clearly see it. We always bring our depravity, fallibility, and other presuppositions to the table. We're always looking through a lots of lenses.

This is equally true for truth, goodness, and beauty. It is the job of a Christian to immerse himself in the Scriptures so that his “lenses” can be lined up with God’s. It is only then that he can really know what is beautiful.

What are some synonyms for beauty? Are any of these used in Scripture to describe God?

The Source of Beauty (pp. 85—91)

The Beauty of God (pp. 85—88)

Pleasure in God

“There once was in man a true happiness of which now remain to him only the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present. But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself” (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans], 113).

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves” (Blaise Pascal, *Pascal’s Pensées*, trans. by W. F. Trotter [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958], 113).

Why is taking pleasure in God necessary in order to glorify him? Why is serving God merely out of duty not enough?

The Beauty of God

“Jonathan Edwards’ thorough treatment of God’s principal aim inevitably led him to attempt to define God’s glory. Edwards essentially argues that the glory of something is what ‘signifies excellency, dignity, or worthiness of regard.’ He cites multiple Scripture passages to illustrate that ‘the word glory is very commonly used to signify the excellency of a person or thing, as consisting either in greatness, or in beauty, or in both conjunctly’ (Jonathan Edwards, “The End For Which God Created the World,” in John Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998], 231). For Edwards, ‘glory’ is the express manifestation of this inner beauty. He notes that Scripture often speaks of glory in terms of ‘shining brightness, by an emanation of beams of light.’ He compares this ‘brightness’ to that of the sun or moon, their glory being the brilliant emanation of their inner beauty (Ibid., 233). In other words, according to Edwards, God’s glory is essentially His beauty” (WIS, 99–100).

Consider God’s glory. How is it like our concept of beauty?

Consider the kind of pleasure we take in God’s perfections. How does this pleasure magnify those perfections?

Objective Beauty

“We call the object beautiful because it has certain properties that make it admirable. It has those properties whether or not its having them results in its being enjoyable by you or me” (Mortimer Adler, *Six Great Ideas* [New York: Collier Books, 1981], 112).

“Too late I loved You, Beauty of Ancient Days, yet ever new! Too late I loved You! Behold, You were within me, and I was outside of You. There I searched for You, I who was deformed, plunging amid those beautiful things which You had made. You were with me, but I was not with You. Things held me far from You, which, unless they were in You, would not exist at all. You called and shouted and burst my deafness. You flashed, shone, and shattered my blindness. You breathed aromas, and I drew in breath, and now I pant for You. I tasted You, and now I hunger and thirst. You touched me, and I burned for Your peace” (Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* [New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1996], 276).

What are some implications of the fact that God is the source of all beauty? What does this mean for other objects of beauty or the criteria with which we may judge beauty?

The Beauty of Creation (pp. 88—90)

Creation

“In the Genesis account of creation, God affirmed that His creation was indeed beautiful by calling it ‘good.’ Spiegel notes that this judgment of the ‘goodness’ (*tov* in the Hebrew) of His creation could not have referred to its moral excellence since ‘moral evaluations properly apply only to persons or their actions’ (James S. Spiegel, “Aesthetics and Worship,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* [Winter, 1998]: 41-42).

Furthermore, Kilby notes, ‘since we say such things only of acts we have pleasure in, the Great Artist was evidently much pleased with his world’ (Kilby, *Christianity and Aesthetics* [Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1961], 18). Therefore, ‘good’ must refer to aesthetic excellence, and indeed *tov* as well as its Greek equivalent *kala* often designate beauty’ (*WIS*, 107–108).

How can creation be considered beautiful when compared to the beauty of God? What are some qualities of beauty found in creation that reflect God’s beauty?

The Source of Beauty

“To believe in God involves accepting him as the sovereign perfection, not only of truth and goodness but also of beauty, thus establishing the highest possible conceptions of excellence” (Kilby, 22).

Qualities of Beauty (pp. 90—91)

Standards of Beauty

“Hans Urs von Balthasar states that ‘the cosmos is experienced as the representation and manifestation of the hidden transcendent beauty of God’ (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, ii. trans. Andrew Louth et al. [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984], 154), and both Edwards and Kuyper attribute that representation to observable qualities such as ‘regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony, etc.’ and ‘balance, rhythm, symmetry, proportion, etc.’ (Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue* [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960], 27-28; Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme en de Kunst*, 17; quoted in Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise* [London: Continuum, 1991], 97). Indeed, as Edwards wrote, ‘The beauty of the world is a communication of God’s beauty’ (Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies* [Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500], ed. Thomas A. Schafer [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994], 384). Thus, these properties in nature and art create beauty expressly because they are the same properties that comprise the beauty of God” (*WIS*, 108–109).

Name some objects that are typically considered beautiful in our society and apply the criteria of order, proportion, and radiance to them. Are they truly beautiful when compared to God?

Do the same exercise with various styles of music.

Bad Taste

“The Christian is well aware that his tastes may be lower than his best judgment or his conscience might dictate” (Kilby, 23).

Understanding beauty to be something objectively based upon the beauty of God, explain how taste is not merely subjective. What would make objectively bad taste? What about good taste?

The Marring of Beauty (pp. 91—93)

Depravity

The Bible teaches that every person is totally and completely depraved.

Genesis 6:5 – “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Ephesians 4:17-19 – “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”

Total depravity does not mean that man is as depraved as he could be, but that all of man is completely depraved. No part of man escapes the reach of depravity. Not his will, not his actions, not his preferences, not his culture, and certainly not his ability to judge beauty.

Sin

“What does it mean to ‘fall short’ of the glory of God? It does not mean we were supposed to be as glorious as God is and have fallen short. We ought to fall short in that sense! The best explanation of Romans 3:23 is Romans 1:23. It says that those who did not glorify or thank God ‘became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.’ This is the way we “fall short” of the glory of God: we exchange it for something of lesser value. All sin comes from not putting supreme value on the glory of God—this is the very essence of sin” (John Piper, *Desiring God* [Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Books, 1996], 56–57).

What is the nature of human depravity and what is its impact upon our ability to (a) take ultimate pleasure in the beauty of God and (b) correctly judge true beauty?

The Redemption of Beauty (pp. 93—97)

Velled Beauty (pp. 94—95)

How does depravity prevent people from recognizing the beauty of Christ in the gospel? What is their only hope?

Affections

“Think about an American soldier on foreign soil whose job is to guard a certain road. He is serving his country because of certain beliefs that he has about his country and freedom. Now what if during his shift a band of angry insurgents comes down the road toward him? What keeps that soldier from turning and running for his life? Is it his intellectual beliefs that motivate him to stand firm and fight? In a sense, it is his beliefs. Were it not for those beliefs, he would not stand firm. However, I dare say that as the insurgents move toward him, the soldier is not thinking through his beliefs intellectually. At that moment, in the heat of battle, it is not the beliefs per se that are sustaining him; it is his affections. He not only believes in his country and freedom, he loves his country and freedom. It is not just intellectual assent that motivates him and sustains him. It is courage. To be honest, I believe in this country and in freedom just as much as those soldiers, but I’m not so sure I would have the courage to do what they do. Those affections take time to develop, and without them, the soldier would be overcome with fear” (WIS, 55).

Why is it that we only submit to things when we recognize their value and set our affections upon them? What is the ultimate reason, then, that people reject the gospel?

What is the only way that a person’s ability to recognize the beauty and value of the gospel can be restored?

Revealed Beauty (pp. 95–97)

Regeneration

God supernaturally implants new life into spiritually dead men (Eph 2:1-5; Col 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3, 23). This “new birth” is the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit (John 1:13; 3:8).

Discuss the implications of the fact that the Holy Spirit has regenerated a believer’s heart and given him the ability to apprehend the beauty of God. What does this mean for a believer’s ability to apprehend other forms of beauty?

The Judgment of Beauty (pp. 98—100)

Judgment

“Teach me good judgment” (Psalm 119:66).

“The wise of heart is called discerning” (Proverbs 16:21).

“Judge with right judgment” (John 7:24).

“Test everything” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

“Approve what is excellent” (Romans 2:18).

“Approve what is excellent” (Philippians 1:10).

“Let the others weigh what is said” (1 Corinthians 14:29).

“Discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10).

“But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

Why is it important to discern what is truly beautiful?

Judgment of Beauty

“The judgment about the beauty of an object in terms of its admirability for intrinsic excellence or perfection is the judgment of an expert, with special knowledge and skill in judging specimens of a certain kind” (Adler, 115).

“Unfortunately, in the church today there is a hesitance, if not a resistance, to trust the knowledge of so-called ‘experts.’ Independence and autonomy are so highly valued that a reliance on someone else is discouraged. Insisting that someone should trust an expert is tantamount to elitism in many people’s minds. Many say, ‘If I can’t know something for myself, it is not worthy of knowing.’

But if the Bible commands believers to think on those things that are actually intrinsically worthy of praise or if it commands Christians to think on those things that are demonstrably admirable, believers have one of two options. With regard to a specific question of beauty, believers can either spend the necessary time and effort to know everything there is to know about the given specimen and what makes it intrinsically beautiful, or they can trust experts who have already made the judgment” (WIS, 119).

How might the work of applying Philippians 4:8 to every area of a Christian’s life be a difficult task sometimes? Are you willing to work at applying passages like Philippians 4:8 to your musical choices?

Judgment of Beauty

“I contend that just as believers have the biblical responsibility to pursue what is true and what is good—even in areas not explicitly addressed in Scripture—so believers must pursue what is beautiful as well. It will certainly be a continuous process of learning and growth, but it is no different in the realms of truth and goodness. Since God’s glory is His beauty, believers must look to Him as the prototype of absolute beauty, and they must be willing to recognize what is beautiful and what is ugly. Admittedly, taste is the key here. But believers are biblically responsible to sanctify their tastes when they do not correspond to reality” (WIS, 119–120).

What are some areas of belief that you have had to adjust to match with reality?

What are some areas of living that you have had to adjust to match what is really good?

What are some things that you have considered beautiful that you may have to adjust to match what truly is beautiful?

Change Your Taste (pp. 101–102)

Discernment

“Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:3-6).

What are some things in your life that you enjoy simply because you are used to them, not necessarily because they are worthy of enjoying?

What are some songs or styles of music that you enjoy, not because they are really worthy of enjoying, but simply because you have become accustomed to them?

Further Reading

Read Chapter 7 of *WIS* for a detailed discussion of the nature of beauty and the glory of God.

Read Chapter 8 of *WIS* for a discussion of the sanctifying power of beauty.

Chapter Review

Define beauty.

Define God's glory.

What is the connection between God's glory and beauty?

How may other things may be compared to God and determined to be beautiful?

Describe a Christian's responsibility to change his tastes.

Chapter 6: How Should We Think About Sunday Morning?

Chapter Motivation

Most churches today unfortunately put little or no thought and effort into planning their corporate worship services. This problem exists for a number of reasons, some of which are addressed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with practical suggestions for making corporate worship most beneficial.

Memory Verse

Psalm 118:21–24

“I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²²The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. ²³This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (ESV)

Introduction (p. 103)

What do you consider the primary purpose your church gathers on Sunday?

How much do you prepare during the week for your church’s Sunday morning service?

The Purpose of Corporate Worship (104—115)

The Early Church

“It is only natural . . . that we seek the origins of early Christian worship in Jewish temple and synagogue worship” (Andrew E. Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 222).

Have you ever heard anyone argue that churches do not gather to worship? What do you think about such an argument?

Have you every considered the importance of corporate worship? Have you ever heard someone says, “I can worship just as well by myself?” What do you think about such a statement?

The Day Belonging to the Lord (104—107)

The Lord’s Day

“I believe that Sunday should be spent in recreation. You are dreadfully shocked, and well you may be. But what do I mean by ‘recreation?’ It means creating us new. Oh, that everybody who talks about spending Sunday in recreation would come to be recreated, regenerated, renewed, refreshed, revived, and made to rejoice in God” (C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 27:474).

Charles Ryrie: “The origin of the Lord’s Day must be traced to its association with the day of Christ’s resurrection. Christ sanctified the day by his resurrection and emphasized it by his appearing to the disciples on Sunday (John 20:26) and sending the Holy Spirit on the first day of the week (Acts 2).”

Christian Sabbath?

The Lord’s Day is not equivalent to the Sabbath, but the principle of Sabbath rest may be applied to it. Sabbath is rooted in the created order; the Mosaic Law simply says to “remember” what had already been instituted in Genesis 2 and practiced before the giving of the Law. God has wired into man the need for rest, and the principle of sabbath rest was made for that reason:

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Do you consider Sunday to be a special day set apart from the other six days of the week? What are the implications of understanding the first day of the week to be special in God’s sight?

Lord’s

The term “Lord’s” in Revelation 1:10 is not *kurios*, the customary noun for referring to the Lord and the term used in the phrase “Day of the Lord,” but *kuriakos*, a possessive adjective referring to an object which especially “belongs to the Lord.” The same term is used in 1 Corinthians 11:20 with reference to the Lord’s Supper.

What is the importance of the fact that the first day of the week is a day especially belonging to the Lord?

Other Early Witness

Justin Martyr (1st-2nd century): “On the day called Sunday is an assembly of all who live in the country, and the sermons of the Apostles and the writings of the prophets are read.”

Tertullian (2nd century): “The Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian church assemblies and holy worship—every eighth day is the Christian’s festival.”

Dionysius (2nd century): “Today we celebrate the Lord’s holy day.”

What are some areas in your thinking or living that you may need to change so as to dedicate Sunday to the Lord?

The Command to Worship Corporately (p. 108)

Corporate Praise

“Both Old Testament command and New Testament example demonstrate that God desires that believers lift His praises together. He wants His children to gather for the purpose of honoring Him. This worship is still an individual, heartfelt response toward God, but it is expressed publicly in the presence of other believers. That brings God even more glory than if it were done privately.

For instance, a person receives more honor when he is praised in the presence of many people than if he were praised by one person privately. The great honor that comes with winning an Olympic gold medal is because thousands of people are watching the event. A solo violin can be beautiful, but when it is combined with other instruments in a symphony, the glory of the music is even more spectacular. The same is true when God is praised publicly in the presence of others” (WIS, 154).

What are various ways that corporate worship is different than individual, private worship?

Corporate Praise

“Personal praise is sweet unto God, but congregational praise has a multiplicity of sweetnesses in it” (C. H. Spurgeon, “Psalm the Hundred and Forty-Ninth” in *The Treasury of David*, Vol. IV: *Psalms 90-103* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House], 438).

What are implications of the fact that churches must gather for corporate worship?

The Examples of Corporate Worship (pp. 109—119)

Devotion to Teaching

Just as a healthy infant needs food, so a healthy infant church needs the food of Scriptural teaching. And it is no different for an adult. We *need* food in order to be healthy. There is no such thing as a person who has reached such a high level of physical maturity that he no longer needs food. The same is true for the Church. No matter how much we grow and mature, we will always need to be devoted to apostolic teaching — the teaching of the New Testament.

Do you crave Scriptural teaching? Are you devoted to it? How is devotion to Scriptural teaching an essential component of corporate worship?

Fellowship

koinonia – the share which one has in anything; participation; community; association; communion

Do you see Christian fellowship as more significant and more important than the friendships unbelievers enjoy? How is biblical fellowship a sharing in a common spiritual bond in Jesus Christ?

Communion

In reaction to sacramental teaching, many churches refer to the Lord's Supper as merely a "memorial" and even shy away from using the term, "Communion." However, although biblically the Lord's Table is a memorial (see 1 Corinthians 11), it is more than that. 1 Corinthians 10 explains the spiritual significance of this gathering; it is a time when the true unity of Christ and his church is manifested. This is why only true believers should participate and shy whole churches should participate together as a sign of true communion with each other and with Christ.

What is the significance and importance of the Lord's Supper? What are some ways in which observance of the Lord's Supper could be improved to manifest its importance?

The Prayers

The definite article ("the") likely indicates that these were specific prayers that were part of Jewish liturgy. Now "liturgy" is not a bad word. It simply means doing things in church meetings in an organized, orderly fashion, and since Paul commands the church do hold their meetings "decently and in order" in 1 Corinthians 14, liturgy is a necessary thing. Now, churches that are described as "liturgical" are usually those who do things in a prescribed order without any real meaning or spiritual purpose, and so we do not want to be "liturgical" in that sense. But every church has a liturgy — a order to which they do things. And this early church had a liturgy — an organization to their meetings. Where would they have gotten such a liturgy? Since every member of this infant church was a Jew, they would have naturally gotten their liturgy from Jewish worship. And why not? Christianity is simply the correct continuation of true, biblical, Old Testament Judaism.

Do you consider corporate prayer as important? What are some ways a church could conduct corporate prayer to help its congregation recognize its importance?

The Terms for Corporate Worship (pp. 114—115)

Why does the worship language used in the New Testament to describe the church imply that churches assemble to worship?

What are some ways that your thinking and practice may need to change in light of the fact that the first day of the week belongs to the Lord in a special way and that the Bible expects churches to gather on his day for corporate worship?

The Preparation for Corporate Worship (pp. 115—119)

Public Worship

“Public worship, then, should involve people who have individually committed themselves to honoring the Lord and serving Him each day. They gather together in a joint expression of God's worthiness. As such, the public worship service is the glorious culmination of everything that has preceded. It is not only the highlight of the week, it is the highlight of life itself”

(Gary Reimers, *The Glory Due His Name: What God Says About Worship* [Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2009], 3).

Do you always feel rushed and ill-prepared for worship on Sunday mornings? List some areas where you may need to be better prepared for Sunday.

Preparation Begins Monday Morning (p. 117)

What are some practical things you can do to prepare during the week for corporate worship?

Preparation Intensifies Saturday Evening (pp. 117—118)

What are some practical things that you can do on Saturday evening so that you will be adequately prepared for the Lord's Day?

Preparation Culminates Sunday Morning (pp. 118—119)

Preparation

“[Church leaders] should plan a period of time when believers can simply calm their minds and prepare to worship the Lord. This could be as simple as dedicating the first five minutes of a service as a quiet time. It is not a mystical time when believers are “ushered into the presence of God,” nor is it necessarily explicitly “spiritual.” It is simply a time when church members can collect their thoughts, forget about the cares of this world, and prepare to worship. Providing tools to stimulate biblical meditation such as a suggested Scripture passage or a hymn may be helpful.

Some people may complain that this is too serious and stodgy and that it hinders friendship and fellowship. We certainly want fellowship to take place, and scheduling time for fellowship is important. But if the service is to be an effective time of congregational worship, church members must be allowed a peaceful time to prepare themselves for worship (*WIS*, 225–226).

The Participation In Corporate Worship (pp. 119—124)

Singing (pp. 119—120)

Singing

“Congregational singing is one of the most important aspects of a worship service. It is the one event where all members of the congregation can verbally worship the Lord together. Congregants should make good use of this time to understand the biblical truth expressed in the hymns and respond to the Lord with their affections” (WIS, 227).

What are some practical things that you can do to make sure that you are fully engaged during the congregational singing in your church?

Offerings (p. 120)

Offerings

“Offerings are sometimes one of these ‘featured event’ times, and rarely do people really consider what is happening. It may seem in some instances as if people ‘pay their dues’ and then enjoy the show. This could be solved a number of ways. One might be to have an instrumentalist play a simple hymn of consecration straight from the hymnbook, letting the congregation know the hymn number ahead of time so they can meditate on God’s blessings to them and how they should respond in worship with their giving. Even having the ushers wait until the second stanza would give the congregants time to consider these things before they are distracted with the passing of a plate. Whatever solution is utilized, people should understand that giving is one important spiritual response of worship that every believer should enjoy” (WIS, 234).

What are some practical things that you can do to give more meaning to giving in your church?

Prayer (p. 121)

What are some practical things that you can do to have an active heart and mind during corporate prayer in your church?

Special Music (pp. 121–123)

“Special Music”

“In congregational worship, therefore, it is important that every facet of the service enable the congregation to respond properly to biblical truth. That means that the order of service, the hymns chosen, the manner in which they are played or sung, and the overall perception given to the music by worship leaders must promote truth and proper response to that truth. If true worship is to take place, special music must focus the worshipers’ attention to biblical truth. Musicians must do everything they can to promote biblical truth through their music instead of drawing attention to themselves and their skills. These musicians should view themselves as ‘solo worship leaders’ who are responsible for directing the rest of the congregation in true, biblical worship” (WIS, 232).

What are some practical things that you can do to actively participate during prepared musical offerings in your church?

Silence (p. 123)

What can you do during silences in your church services to make the service more beneficial?

Preaching (pp. 123–124)

Word from God

“We should view preaching as the primary time when God speaks during the service. This is the time when believers are confronted with clear, biblical truth from God. Every attempt should be made to be sensitive to conviction from the Lord. Worship occurs only when you acknowledge truth and respond with change, affection, or consecration to God.

Since every believer is responsible to respond to biblical truth, pastors should provide a time for response after the Word of God is preached. Responding to truth is not the responsibility only of those who ‘feel convicted’ or raise their hands in an invitation. All believers should respond in some way every time they are confronted with scriptural truth. Giving the congregation a few moments of silence at the end of the message could facilitate effective response time” (WIS, 228).

What are some practical things that you can do to have an active heart and mind during the preaching of your church?

Conclusion (p. 124)

What does worshipping with “reverence and awe” imply for our corporate worship?

What significance for worship is it that God is a “consuming fire”?

Further Reading

Read Chapter 10 of *WIS* for a detailed explanation of congregational worship.

Read Chapters 12–15 of *WIS* for principles that should govern our corporate worship, especially our musical choices.

Read Chapter 17 of *WIS* for practical discussion of the various elements of corporate worship.

Read Appendix A of *WIS* for a plea to teach children hymns.

Chapter Review

Explain why the first day of the week should be significant for a Christian.

Explain why churches must gather for corporate worship.

What principles should govern corporate worship?

What are some practical ways you can prepare for and actively participate in corporate worship?
