

Ephesians 5:19—speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Individuals who are “filled with” God’s Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and walk in His “will” (Ephesians 5:17) behave as Paul describes in Ephesians 5:19–6:20. They find themselves with a song on their hearts (Psalm 40:3), the first characteristic addressed in Ephesians 5:19. To possess “the fruit of the Spirit” (“love, joy, peace,” etc.—Galatians 5:22-23) and refrain from “singing” (Acts 16:19-25) is impossible. Praise also follows those times when God delivers us from our foes (Exodus 15:1-21; Judges 5:1-31).

speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, (5:19a)

“Speaking” means “to make an utterance; to babble, to talk”—sounds offered to God by the Spirit-filled believer’s voice (vocal cords). These sounds are to be addressed “to one another” (Ephesians 5:19a)—to believers. To determine exactly what the terms “psalms,” “hymns,” and “spiritual songs” meant in Paul’s day is difficult. “Psalms” is defined as “a striking or twitching with the fingers on musical strings” and may very well point to the Old Testament Psalms, as well as New Testament Psalms (1Corinthians 14:26) put to music. “Hymns” are “songs of praise addressed to God.” Jesus must have been greatly encouraged by the “hymn” of praise voiced to God (from the “upper room”—Mark 14:15) prior to His arrest and crucifixion (Mark 14:26). In the case of Ephesians 5:19a, “hymns” could point to the songs of praise written by the early church leaders, many of which were taken directly from the Scriptures. “Spiritual songs” are defined by the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* as “songs inspired by the Holy Spirit and employed in the joyful and devotional expression of the spiritual life.”¹ The songs of Revelation 5:9, 14:3, and “the song of Moses and of the Lamb” (Revelation 15:3) are said to be examples of “spiritual songs.” Whatever the case, songs of praise are to be directed toward God in the presence of fellow believers (Ephesians 5:19a) for the purpose of encouragement and exhortation. In so doing, God’s people experience His nearness (2 Chronicles 5:13; Psalm 22:3 KJV).

singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (5:19b)

“Singing” in the New Testament always points to singing with the voice (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). “Making melody” is from the Greek *psallo* from which we get “psalm,” meaning “a striking or twitching with the fingers on musical strings.” Therefore, the Spirit-filled “heart” (Ephesians 5:19b) can produce both vocal and instrumental music uplifting “to the Lord” and His people. Effectiveness in this case is not dependent upon musical capability. In fact, some of the most talented vocalist and musicians lack the maturity to minister effectively while leading worship. Spirit-led ministry has always been, and will continue to be, an issue of the heart.

Ephesians 5:20—always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Believers filled with God’s Spirit live in an attitude of thanksgiving. The converse is also true, for the Spirit doesn’t fill the unthankful.

Spirit-filled saints “always” give “thanks”—regardless of the circumstance. They have no time to complain or feel slighted, for they perceive themselves as continually blessed. God is very much glorified (2Corinthians 4:7-17) through such behavior, which adds incentive to respond

favorably to intense trial (Acts 16:23-25).

The Psalms are filled with praise and adoration for the Father, for He is to be approached in an attitude of “*thanksgiving*” (Psalm 100:4):

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. (Psalm 100:4)

“*Thanksgiving*” and praise restore perspective, freeing us to accept God’s response to our petitions as the most excellent way. Improper perspective yields inflexibility, resulting in bitterness when God’s answer is “No.”

We are to thank God “*for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Ephesians 5:20). Because “*name*” points to character, we are to give thanks to the Father in agreement with Christ’s character—Who He is in His Person, both morally and ethically. Note how He responded while suffering unjustly:

and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; (1Peter 2:23)

Jesus responded without complaint to the most horrific circumstances imaginable (Philippians 2:5-8). So can we when filled with God’s Spirit!

Our thanks is to be given “*to God...the Father*” (Ephesians 5:20) because we have been “*blessed...with every spiritual blessing...in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:3), “*every good thing...and every perfect gift is from*” Him (James 1:17), and we are part of His family (John 1:12). How could we be anything but thankful!

Ephesians 5:21—and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Everyone “*filled*” with God’s Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) knows how to “*be subject to one another*” (Ephesians 5:21). Why? The Spirit only fills those who desire to understand, walk in, and apply the principle of submission.

Although Ephesians 5:21 is addressing submission within the church, it can apply to the family as well. Just as the members of Christ’s body are to “*be subject to one another*” for the good of the whole (the entire body), submission between the husband and wife generates stability for the entire household. Husbands might say, “To submit to my wife would result in a loss of authority.” Not so, for God honors the husband’s submission by bestowing favor and unity, freeing him to lead according to the Divine blueprint.

True, biblical submission is to be done “*in the fear of Christ*” (Ephesians 5:21), confirming that husbands are to lead their families as Christ leads the church. This leadership on the husband’s part requires personal spiritual growth, for spiritual immaturity generally yields one of the following scenarios: (1) a passive husband and dad—leaving all parties insecure within the home (2) a brutal husband and dad—generating fear and instability for the entire household (3) divorce (4) a husband and dad who abandons the home, severing all family ties. No wonder our nation is floundering so!

The power and effectiveness to “*be subject to one another*” is found only “*in the fear of Christ*” (Ephesians 5:21). “*Fear*” in this case can point to a reverential fear, a fear motivated by love for the Being Who is feared—Christ in this case. We serve Jesus because we “*love*” Jesus (2Corinthians 5:14)—not because we are afraid of Him:

For the love of Christ controls us... (2Corinthians 5:14)

God will never condemn us, for His “*kindness*” attracted us to Him in the first place:

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
(Romans 2:4)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
(Romans 8:1)

The loving, understanding husband never misuses his authority, for the very foundation of a healthy marriage is mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21; 1Corinthians 7:3-4). Jesus submitted to the Father (John 5:30) while possessing the same nature as the Father—yet retained His authority. A wife is free, therefore, to submit to her spiritual equal—her husband (Galatians 3:28). Obviously, husbands and wives play different roles within the family structure (as do leaders within the church). Thus, God ordained submission for the protection of the family, church, and society in general.

Once a couple submits to God and to one another, the supernatural kicks in. The husband suddenly finds himself submitting to Christ’s presence in his wife, the wife suddenly finds herself submitting to Christ’s presence in her husband—and their marriage becomes a picture of Christ’s relationship with the church. The “*source of quarrels and conflicts*” (James 4:1) is suddenly eradicated, which positively affects their relationships within the church. What a meaningful way to live!

To carry this topic a step farther, the husband and wife, in carrying out their responsibilities to their children, are to “*subject*” themselves to their children’s spiritual and moral wellbeing (Ephesians 6:4). Likewise, Paul encouraged masters to “*subject*” themselves to their slaves’ wellbeing since “*there is no partiality with Him*” (Ephesians 6:9). Spirit-filled Christians exemplify a lifestyle of submission because they view all believers as spiritual equals (Galatians 3:28). Yet, submission is not synonymous with passivity. Keep this fact in mind as we continue.

¹ Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. (1915). Entry for ‘Spiritual Songs’. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. <http://www.studylight.org/encyclopedias/isb/view.cgi?n=8278>.