

The Importance of Music



*“...Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; **giving thanks** always for all things **unto God** and the Father **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...**” (Eph. 5:19-20).*

I will never forget when I was a small child the comfort that came with the sound of my grandmother’s voice as she hummed and sang in the kitchen while cooking or cleaning the house. The words of “*What A Friend We Have In Jesus,*” “*Love Lifted Me,*” “*O For Grace To Trust Him More,*” and so many more, struck a soothing chord in my heart and even beyond that brought a sweet atmosphere of peace into the home.

It is likely that none of us can remember when we were first introduced to music. In all probability, from the time we entered into the world someone held us and hummed or sang a soothing melody into our ears. So our first introduction to music was probably delivered in the purest form of unrestrained love.

I venture to say that most of us are not even aware of the importance that music plays in our lives and in our society. We are greatly affected by the sounds and the words that are “piped” into our inner selves in the form of music, even when we are unaware. There are sad songs that bring their moods and happy songs that make you pat your feet and want to sing along. So it isn’t hard to realize the effect those extremes have on us. But what about the lyrics and the grating sounds of distorted music of so many of the modern, seemingly harmless songs of today? I tend to believe that their influence is detrimental to us and society as a whole.

I was brought up in Gospel music with songs that were easily understood and that had singable melodies. In the South we had all day singings on Sunday afternoons, singing conventions periodically, and eventually all night singings.

I remember when I first heard the phrase “all night singing.” The year was 1949 and I was a little girl in the car with my mother and her brothers and sisters, *The Happy Goodman Family*. We were on our way to Atlanta, Georgia to take part in such an occasion. That phrase was foreign to us and there was much speculation in the car that day, such as, “was the singing really going to last all night?!” We knew about “all day singings,” my mother’s family had done those for years. They always took place in church on Sunday, usually in a remote area, and they *did* last all day. The ladies prepared meals and brought them to the singings in the trunks of their cars. At noon the service was halted for dinner, which was spread on makeshift tables on the grounds. Then singing was resumed and much of it was congregational. They sang from “singing convention” songbooks, and song leaders were called up from the audience to lead a song or two. Then my family would be invited to the platform to sing a few “specials.” Even a child could see the joy on the faces of the people at those happy events.

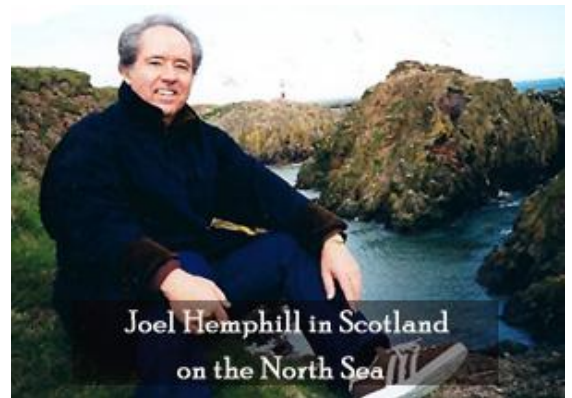
In Tennessee, a man named *Wally Fowler* had an idea. Why not shift the singings from all day, to all night, using auditoriums, and school gymnasiums, and charge a small fee to help support the singers? His idea was an overnight phenomenon. It crossed over denominational boundaries and drew people in great numbers. And no wonder, it was the most exciting thing that some Christians had ever experienced. This was *happy Gospel!* The songs were straight forward about the blood, the cross, the risen Jesus, eternal bliss, the love of God, prayer, etc. This, mixed with a touch of humor, gave the audience a night to remember. It was Christian entertainment at its finest. But it went beyond that. Those songs, and the way they were delivered, touched the heart. And a need was met for audience participation; clapping, laughing, and tears, that many were not getting in structured religious services. Taking this music beyond the walls of the church was an idea whose time had come! This type of music sprang from the fertile soil of the Bible belt and that’s why



some refer to it as “*Southern Gospel Music.*” It is still blessing multitudes today as it is known and loved around the world. And my involvement with Gospel music continues, because in 1966, when Joel was 27, while seeking God for a greater anointing to reach more people for the Lord, he was blessed with the gift of songwriting. From there, “*The Hemphill Family*” was thrust into the world of Gospel music, writing and singing songs to magnify the Lord and encourage his people

An anointed spiritual song has a way of surfacing in our spirits when we need it most. Music is such a big part of worship and it is so important to familiarize ourselves with good Gospel songs, along with the great old hymns of the church, because they bring comfort and restore hope and joy, causing us to *sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord!*

One of the most troubling affects of dealing with modern society with its pressures and pursuit of *things* is depression in Christians and non-Christians alike. The Biblical prescription for depression is praise and is found in Isaiah 61:3, “*to appoint unto them...the garment of **praise** for the spirit of heaviness.*” The word *heaviness* in this verse is the old English word for our commonly used word depression, and **praise** is the antidote. We found an example of this when we ministered in Scotland in an area along the North Sea where winters are long and severe. The resident’s humorous comment was, “we have three months of winter, and nine months of bad weather.” Consequently depression is common among them. But they have learned how to combat it. The answer is **music** and **singing!** Most every home has a piano and/or an organ, and on dreary evenings they gather at someones home in groups of fifteen or twenty, for food, fellowship, and singing. Joyful singing! Spiritual singing! Gospel singing! And it brightens their lives and dispels gloom.



The apostle Paul knew that singing “*psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,*” is so important, that he gave the same instructions to the church at Colosse that he gave to the church at Ephesus, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to **God***” (Col. 3:16 NIV).

When a body of believers gathers and sings praises unto God in one mind and one accord, we understand like Paul that this is true worship and it produces great joy!