

LIVING THE CHRISTLIFE  
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**Studies in Ephesians**  
**Ephesians 5:17-21**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

—Ephesians 5:17-21 (ESV)

v 17 – “Therefore do not be foolish...”

All of this passage is about *how we are to live*. These are not just particular instructions for particular circumstances. Paul is describing the Christian life.

“foolish”—does not mean that a person’s behavior would be outlandish or overtly silly. It means being unwise, ignorant, wasteful. Some of those choices might not seem “foolish.” cf the foolish wasting of a fortune.

v 18 – “And do not get drunk with wine...”

Paul is continuing to address some behaviors in Ephesus that should have been abandoned

“but be filled with the Spirit.”

To be led and shaped by the Holy Spirit is to be a defining characteristic of all Christians. Sometimes, when Scripture refers to someone as being filled with the Spirit, it refers to a condition of an especially intense presence and expression of the Spirit in and through a person or group (cf “Do you have joy?” with “Are you filled with joy?”)

Here, the apostle points first to worship through song as an occasion during which we can be—or should be—filled with the Spirit.

It is important to note that what follows—giving thanks, submission to one another, and examples in further verses—are also a continuation of the exhortation to be filled with the Spirit and are offered as situations in which this should be manifest.

v 19 – “addressing one another...”

An important and even beloved verse for church musicians!

A great guide “in miniature” for congregational song

“addressing one another”

Of course we praise God through our music! We also address one another...

Songs of witness, songs of exhortation, songs of appeal

We are to edify one another through our congregational song—being filled with the Spirit!

“psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”

Paul was probably more describing than prescribing—but this is still an excellent one-phrase guide to different types of congregational music, recognized even in NT times

Psalms...  
Hymns...  
Spiritual Songs...

“singing and making melody in your heart...”

Singing is for everyone!

making melody – *psalló* – an instrumental term, usually to pluck or play on a stringed instrument. Here the encouragement, going along with being filled with the Spirit, is that as we sing we make music in our hearts—we sing with hearts and voices!

v 20 – “giving thanks...”

This is an *additional* example of being filled with the Spirit

Paul does not just mean when we are singing, he means in our daily living

“always for all” – *pantote hyper pantōn*

God’s people are to be a thankful people

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Never to be forgotten or omitted

All has been made possible by Jesus Christ and only by Jesus Christ

v 21 – “submitting to one another...”

This is a *continuation* of being filled with the Spirit!

Taught by Jesus, demonstrated by Jesus, commanded by Jesus, expected by Jesus.

We do this out of reverence (*phobos*) for Christ.