

Introduction

Every generation has its defining song whether its a sacred or secular generation.

John Lennon's "Imagine" during the turbulent 1960s

Justin Beiber's remix of Luis Fonsi's "Despacito" this past summer

These 2 songs celebrate something in our culture: protest or free "love"

Their content says something about its respective generation: "I want peace" or "I'm lonely"

Their art seeks to engage a listening audience: songwriting genre or Latino hip-hop

What do the songs of the church say about *the church*? What does the content say about our understanding of God? What do their styles say about us? Do we know what we're singing?

What should the church sing?

I. Learn the Lyrics

A) Song lyrics liberate our hearts, souls, and minds. (Romans 12:1-2)

Comparison and contrast of John 4 and John 8: "...**the truth will set you free.**"

	John 4 (half-breeds)	John 8 (pharisees)
Rendezvous	Woman at the Well	Pharisees in the Temple
Reality	She needs living water	They need true light
Request	"Can I have your living water?"	"Identify yourself!"
Requisite	Repent of your adultery	Repent of your ignorance
Result	Liberation: she testified	Denial: they protested

B) Song lyrics shape our theology. (1 Corinthians 14:15b & Colossians 3:16a)

"[Hymns are] said to be second to the Bible in developing Christian faith." (Reynolds. xvii)

"The ordinary person's systematic theology." (Reynolds. xvii)

Paul says in 2 different places:

"...I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also." (1 Cor. 14:15b)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..." (Col. 3:16a)

C) Song lyrics are sometimes overlooked. (Matthew 24:4)

"And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray."

Luis Fonsi's "Despacito" meaning: "gently" or "slowly"

"Language isn't a factor...music unites us." -Luis Fonsi (songfacts.com)

Most streamed and visited song on the internet: 4.6 billion views, #1 song 16 weeks straight

90% is in Spanish: do we even know what we're entertained by? what are we "united" around?

Lust: we don't even realize it because the music can deceive and debase our minds...

*Guard the message and guard our minds so that the message dwells richly in us as we sing with our minds alongside our hearts heeding the call to worship God.

II. History Helps

History of church music is marked by:

A) Innovation

Unison singing of songs found in Scripture (Song of Moses, Mary, etc.) versus polyphony of the Baroque period such as Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* or Handel's *Messiah*

B) Controversy

Reformation disagreements: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin (1500s)

Psalmody and Hymnody: Watts and mainstreaming the hymn (1600s-1700s)

Modern-day Worship Wars: Hymns vs. Choruses (Last 30 years)

C) Expansion

The Great Awakening in the U.S. in the early-mid 18th Century via the preaching of Whitfield and Edwards' who also promoted Watts' hymns

Charles and John Wesley motivating evangelism via hymns

D) Real World Scenario: "God, our Father, we adore Thee" merged with "Good, Good Father"

G.W. Frazer's "God, our Father, we adore Thee" (19th Century Irish hymn)

R. H. Prichard's HYFRYDOL tune (1830 Welsh tune also employed for Wesley's "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus")

Anthony Brown & Pat Barrett's "Good, Good Father"

Equipping the content of a sometimes struggling popular worship with context and revising

*A diverse song library that spans millennia strengthens our accuracy and creativity in proclaiming theology.

III. Content is King

Sacred songs must employ both accurate theology and appealing art.

A hymn or song is not simply a poem; their identity resides in music. Therefore, a hymn's essence is treasured through its sing-ability as well as their content.

i.e. The Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, The U.S. Capitol; society's endearment of these buildings are derived by their function intersected with art

A crafted sacred song is shaped theology around a melody intended to sing. Therefore its melody ought to be appealing and memorable.

"Ever since we started doing this, people have written to us with their versions of hymns based on Ephesians or predestination. But just because the subject is good does not necessarily mean the song will be good. Our goal is not to have every theological subject covered in song. Our goal is to write great songs, but through them to nourish and enrich and inspire and invigorate people with truth applied intellectually and emotionally. It is a tough goal, which is why in every 100 melodies I write, maybe half of one becomes a song!" Keith Getty, writer of "In Christ Alone"

The spiritual momentum of a song:

Content (theology) → **Creativity (art)** → **Conviction (emotion)**

Content is paramount. Creativity is important. Together, conviction affirms the effectiveness of both those influences.

*The pursuit of congregational singing ought to be: celebrate a message delivered to us beyond our time and space for us to engage a Being who transcends our time and space that touches us in this ever-present time and space.

Conclusion

Reading of Charles Wesley's "Directions for Congregational Singing" from *Sacred Melody* (1761)(

Works Cited:

William Jensen.Reynolds - Milburn Price - David W.Music - Hope Pub. Co. - 2010. xvii.
songfacts.com