

Music Ministry – Biblical Guidelines

The Purpose of Music

The Bible explains that every good gift comes from God (James 1:17). Music is one of God's good gifts. God has given both man and angels the gift of music-making (Genesis 4:21; Job 38:7). The purpose of music and singing is to rejoice in and worship the Lord (Psalm 95:1-2).

Believers are exhorted, do “not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and **spiritual songs**, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:18-19). The Greek word for **spiritual** (*pneumatikov*) means: **non-carnal**, i.e. (humanly) ethereal (**as opposed to gross**), or (daemoniacally) a spirit (concretely), or (divinely) supernatural, **regenerate**, religious:--spiritual.

Therefore Christians are to avoid carnal music such as: 1) Sensual (i.e. Marilyn Monroe singing Happy Birthday) 2) Sarcastic 3) Mocking 4) Wild/out-of-control 5) Gross, macabre, occult, death-culture, etc.

Worship and Praise throughout Scripture

In the New Testament believers sang worship songs to the Lord (Acts 16:25). They were also encouraged to teach and admonish “one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). A psalm is a sacred worship song directed to the Lord in response to His great love. In the Book of Revelation, and throughout the Bible, every song was sung to God in an intelligent, understandable, reverent, God-centered way (Revelation 5:9; 15:3).

God desires that we “sing praises with understanding” (Psalm 47:7; 1 Corinthians 14:7-9) and “with thanksgiving” (Psalm 147:7). We are exhorted to “play skillfully with a loud noise” (Psalm 33:3) and to “Sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation” (Psalm 95:1) and “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises” (Psalm 98:4).

We are to “Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2). We may also “praise His name with the dance; let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp” (Psalm 149:3). Therefore, while we find the voice to be the primary instrument of song in the Scriptures, the dance and instrumentals were also used to express praise to our Creator.

Worship should with unity focus on God (2 Chronicles 5:13; Romans 15:6). It should agree with God's Word and be understandable to all (1 Corinthians 14:7-9, 14-15; Colossians 3:16; Revelation 5:12-13). It should bear the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace...**gentleness, self-control** (Galatians 5:22-23). Choirs are biblical (2 Chronicles 5:12-14; Nehemiah 12:31-40; Revelation 19:1-6).

More Biblical guidelines

Worship should not be so loud that it damages the body (there were no amplifiers until recently) (1 Corinthians 3:17). The instruments should not drown out the voices (Psalm 47:7). Worship should not direct attention to the worship leader or team – “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31. See also: 1 Corinthians 13:5). “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Matthew 4:10).

God desires that “all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40), because “God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Therefore music should not be chaotic or frenzied. In the Bible, God’s people sang with understanding. Therefore screaming guitars or voices, or unintelligible noise contradict God’s Word and should be avoided. By God’s grace, may we “give no offense” (1 Corinthians 10:32).

Satanic Music

Satan desires worship (Matthew 4:8-9). In the past, Satan used music to stir up people to worship him (Daniel 3:7-10). In the last days all the world will worship the beast (Revelation 13:3-4; 13:8; 13:12; 13:14-15; 19:20). It is quite likely that Satan will incorporate music in the worship of the beast (Ezekiel 28:13). Interestingly, the devil used “all kinds of music” (Daniel 3:5; 3:7; 3:10; 3:15) to encourage pagan worship and idolatry, and the pagans leaped and cried out in a noisy frenzy when calling to their gods (1 Kings 18:25-29). And as Solomon warns, if it happened in the past it will likely occur in the future (Ecclesiastes 1:9; Revelation 9:20).

Because music is such a powerful way to stir hearts and emotions, and because experiential deceptions will be paramount in the last days (Mathew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9), we as disciples of Christ must be extra careful to avoid employing music that contradicts God’s revealed will. Believers in Christ “must worship (God) in Spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Worshipping God with surrendered hearts, in accordance with His Word, is what pleases Him.

Summary

Some justify worldly music and lyrics by quoting the Apostle Paul where he wrote that he became “all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). However, this does not mean Paul disobeyed God’s Word, but that he adapted cultural customs or styles that were acceptable to those he ministered to – without compromising the Scripture. Differing worship styles and various instruments are fine provided they do not violate the biblical guidelines. However, any music that contains screaming, is frenzied, damaging to the body, performer focused, unintelligible, or contains unbiblical lyrics should be avoided. Remember, Paul also wrote, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). By God’s grace, may we never compromise His Word to draw the lost. Biblical music can be a powerful evangelistic tool, but ultimately only God’s Spirit and Word will convict and save. May we do our part by obeying and clearly proclaiming His Word.