

Theological Weaknesses in the Music of Modern Churches

Lesson 4 Music is for God's Glory and the Edification of the Saints

I. Lesson Introduction

Firstly: Our singing of hymns in our worship services is primarily and necessarily done for God's great glory. Nothing done in the worship service should detract in any way from God's glory. Many things must be excluded.

What about the announcements? Announcements that focus on informing saints of the workings and ministry of this local church or God glorifying activities of the regional church are to be done for God's glory.

Secondly: Our singing of hymns in our worship services is secondarily done for the edification of the saints in the truth of God's word and the necessity of serving God in and through the church. By the way: Such edification will by its very nature be glorifying to God.

II. Definitions

To glorify God: means to honor Him by human actions such as:

- preaching,
- music with God honoring lyrics,
- teaching, obedience to God's law,
- proclamation of the gospel of Christ, and
- service to others in the name of Christ for the express purpose of bringing honor to Him.

To Edify the Saints of God: (See definition on page 1 of Lesson #2)

Problem Within the Local Church: A problem within the local church is when any activity occurs without a purpose that seeks to glorify God and/or that seeks to edify the saints of God.

III. Problem of this Weakness

In your experience, how big is the "problem" within our local churches. How would you score them in their seriousness about ensuring that all of the activities of the local church truly:

1. Glorify & honor God?? _____ Score: "10" Exceptional; "5" OK "3" Poorly
2. Edify the saints of God?? _____ Score: "10" Exceptional; "5" OK "3" Poorly

IV. Resolution of this Weakness in Music Ministry

In Lesson #1 of this series we discussed item #6. "Music and Scripture are a God-ordained Marriage" from the Grace Community Church's position paper - "Theology of Music Ministry" (GCC – TMM).

In Lesson #2 of this series we discussed the following 3 items from this GCC-TMM position paper:

- #8: Everything is to be Done for Edification (1 Cor 14:26 & 40)
- #1: The Authority of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- #4: Content Driven Worship (1 Pet 2:9)

In Lesson #3, of this series we discussed the following 4 items from the GCC-TMM position paper:

- #12: An Unswerving Commitment to the Biblical Purpose/Priorities of the Worship Service
- #3: God-Centered & God-Saturated Worship (Is 42:8; Is 48:9-11; 1 Cor 10:31)
- #9: Reverent Worship (Heb 12:28-20)
- #5: Emotion Filled Worship, Not Emotion Driven Worship (Ps33:1; Ps 100:1-2)

In this 4th Lesson, we are discussing 4 more of these items from Grace Community Church's "Theology of Music Ministry" position paper. They are:

#2: Worship as Whole Life Consecration (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15-18)

"Biblical worship is not relegated to 30 minutes of singing on Sunday morning prior to the pastor's sermon; rather it encompasses the whole of our life ([Rom 12:1](#)) lived out before the all-seeing eye of God. Worship should be a perpetual experience of the heart whereby we ascribe to God supreme worth! Worship is expressed both internally and externally; both privately and publicly; both with our lives and our lips. It involves singing ([Heb. 13:15](#)); preaching ([Rom. 1:9](#)); serving ([Heb. 13:16](#)), evangelism ([Rom.15:16](#)), giving ([Phil. 4:18](#)), offering thanksgiving and praise to God ([Heb. 13:15-16](#); cf. [1 Pet. 2:5](#)), as well as every other act of obedience to Him and His Word ([Rom. 12:1ff](#))."

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Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.* NASU

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.* NASU

Comment: Our commitment to Christ as Lord of our lives, leaves us no room for being self-serving, self-centeredness, or pre-occupied with our own "self". In this temporary life that we live here on earth, we serve Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom we owe everything. This is not optional, this is not a suggestion, it must be our expectation for ourselves in order that we would by our lives express the appropriate level of gratitude towards our Savior.

#7: Variety of Music (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)

[Eph. 5:19](#) and [Col. 3:16](#) indicate that music of differing content should be used in communicating the Word of God within the Body. While the difference between "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" may be difficult to distinguish with technical definitions, we believe that "psalms" generally refers to the psalms and canticles in the Bible, "hymns" most likely refers to ancient songs of praise written to teach more theological content in their poetry and verse, and "spiritual songs" are likely the varied and broad songs composed for praise, adoration, and to express the testimony of a heart transformed by Christ.

Eph 5:18-21 *So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; NASU*

Comment: God knows our every thought and our hearts. In terms of worship and honor, all of the music, all of our ministry must be aimed at honoring and glorifying Him. We, as a congregation, do not know everyone's heart, their intent, their purpose, their integrity, nor always do we know what they are trying to say. The message of the music ministry to the congregation can vary in style immensely, but the message being conveyed needs to be clear and purposeful. The lyrics must be heard and received by the congregation with surety.

#11: Congregational Friendly Worship

"We desire for the music at Grace to encourage the congregation to be a part. To this end we seek to choose songs which are designed to be sung by groups of people (as opposed to being sung to groups of people), and we seek to emphasize the participation of the congregation over the performance of the worship team. This requires choosing music that is relatively easy to follow and fostering a sound level that enables the congregation to hear those around them singing."

Comment: I believe that in order to have whole hearted congregational participation, the first song of a series that are sung in a worship service should be familiar to most of the congregation so that they receive the intended invitation to participate in this, their own music. It is good to learn new songs and hymns that have solid theological content and meaning, but since the congregation, by and large, are not professionally trained musicians, they need to be encouraged to participate with something with which they are familiar with.

#13: Undistracting Excellence (Ps 33:3)

Musicians and singers should strive to honor God with the best of their talents and spiritual maturity. Artistic excellence, however, without godly maturity leads to pretentiousness and shallow praise. Conversely, musicianship that is carelessly offered and poorly rehearsed can dishonor the Lord, contributing to distraction and lack of passion. This is no less important than excellent preparation in the preaching of God's Word or any other ministry gift and talent offered in the church. Natural, undistracting excellence ([Ps. 33:3](#)) that draws

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the listeners' attention to the character and nature of God as expressed in the music (rather than to the performers) must always be the goal of the musicians involved in worship.

Ps 33:1-3 *Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; praise is becoming to the upright. Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; sing praises with a harp of ten strings. Sing Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.*

Comment: Item #13 is well said. In my Christian experience, I have seen this subject area performed always for the glory of God, and I have also often felt left out, have been insulted, have been in churches where most of the congregation did not sing, have left "good" church after several months just because of the music ministry's failures to glorify God and to effectively edify the saints. **Discussion:**

VI. Conclusion

Proper ministry of any kind, performed for the glory of God and for the edification of the saints is hard work requiring thoughtful (spiritual) consideration and quality of purpose. Achieving any such level of ministry requires a prayerful and discerning consideration of God's Word to achieve God's purpose for that ministry.

We must test each ministry of the church (music included) to ensure that our strategy, our exercise of gifts, our implementation are always achieving honor to God and edification of the saints consistent with our individual local Church's mission and beliefs.

In this short course, we've seen that the music ministry, like all the ministries of the church, needs to be spiritually grounded in the Word of God, based on godly precepts, obedient to Scripture, and purposeful in serving the spiritual needs of this particular congregation, not just the congregation's preferences.

Some Important Quotes

God's quest to be glorified and our quest to be satisfied reach their goal in this one experience: our delight in God overflows in praise. For God, praise is the sweet echo of His own excellence in the hearts of this people. For us, praise is the summit of satisfaction that comes from living in fellowship with God. **John Piper**

Music may sometimes move us by the sheer beauty of its sound, but such sentiment is not worship. Music by itself, apart from the truth contained in the lyrics, is not even a legitimate springboard for real worship. Similarly, a poignant story may be touching or stirring, but unless the message it conveys is set in the context of biblical truth, any emotions it may stir are of no use in prompting genuine worship. Aroused passions are not necessarily evidence that true worship is taking place. Genuine worship is a response to divine truth. It is passionate because it arises out of our love for God. But to be true worship it must also arise out of a correct understanding of His law, His righteousness, His mercy, and His being. Real worship acknowledges God as He has revealed Himself in His Word. **John MacArthur**; from *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*; p. 182

Believers, having considered the source, then notice the fallacies. Progress in science and technology is real, but it builds on past truths without rejecting them. Computers don't have to be re-invented in order to keep getting better; innovations expand what they already do. Knowledge accumulates, so it can increase. Scientists and engineers know this, but artists, authors, and philosophers keep trying to start over from ground zero in the humanities. Thus they don't really progress - they become primitive. The point is this: Christians - who have no patience with Darwinistic materialism - often sound as progressive as the most ardent evolutionist. They look for "new" theologies, "new" ways of worship, and "new" music, being quite willing to toss out their entire "old-fashioned" Christian heritage. Such thinking comes from a failure to "understand the times" in which we live.

Gene Edward Veith; *TableTalk of January 2013*; p. 23