

From the Pastor

The peace of Christ ruling in our hearts contributes to our one-body unity as Christians (Col. 3:14-15). Christian music plays an important role in this “one another” relationship we share (v. 16).

Today, however, Christian music divides the body of Christ. Some churches require two services on Sunday morning because the differing musical tastes of Christians preclude their worshipping together. Why the division?

The Bible is clear that sin divides the body of Christ. Where unity breaks down, someone is wrong. Sin is, of course, a transgression of God’s law, so understanding what the Bible says about Christian music is critical to the correction of this serious problem in the church.

This pamphlet is designed for those who long for Christian unity enough to be governed with the peace of Christ in their hearts when it comes to Christian music. The Bible has much to say about how we are to glorify God together with one voice (Rom. 15:6).

Our Weekly Schedule

Sunday:

9:45 am Sunday School for all ages

11:00 am Morning Worship Service

6:00 pm Evening Assembly
(a fellowship meal and hymn sing is held at 12:15 pm on the last Sunday of each month)

Tuesday:

6:00 am Men’s Morning Prayer

Wednesday:

9:00 am Ladies Bible Study (2nd and 4th weeks of the month)

Thursday:

7:00 pm Prayer Meeting for all ages

A nursery room is available for parents, but children are welcome at all services.

Please visit our website for additional information and other ongoing ministries.

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What the Bible
Teaches About:

Christian Music



New Boston Baptist Church

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What the Bible teaches about Christian Music

Before examining some Bible principles about Christian music, it is helpful to understand what is meant here by the term *Christian music*. This term is intended to refer to the tool of Christian ministry in the church that Paul speaks of in passages like Col. 3:16: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” The New Testament church would have thought of this tool of ministry as a subset of the broader ministry of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:26).

Clearly, Christian music is not optional for the assembly. Paul issues a command that churches must follow. In addition, the Corinthian passage noted above indicates that churches need to regulate how they follow this command. They must pass judgment while singers prophesy (v. 29).

The need to regulate the role of Christian music in the corporate worship of the church should not surprise us in view of what the Bible says about the worship of God in general. The God of the Bible requires worship on His terms, not ours. Cain’s offering (Genesis 4), Nadab and Abihu’s fire (Leviticus 10), Moses’ striking the rock (Numbers 20), Uzzah’s steadying the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6), the introduction of new musical instruments under David (2 Chron. 29:25), and Jesus’ cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21) all demonstrate that God severely limits the role of innovation and creativity when it comes to the tools we employ to worship Him.

So what are these limitations when it comes to using Christian music to worship God? We will note four important principles.

(1) Christian music utilizes morally good musical arrangements, not evil ones.

Christian music is comprised of both lyrics and the arrangement of musical sounds that accompany those lyrics. While the difference between good and evil lyrics is obvious to most, some Christians have concluded that music as sound is amoral, neither good nor evil. Two Biblical considerations argue against this conclusion. First, musical sound is a part of God’s created order, which He pronounced “very good” in the moral sense that it met with His absolute approval (Gen. 1:31). Man’s sin and sin’s curse bring disorder, suffering, futility, slavery to corruption, and groaning to all created things, including musical sound (Rom. 8:20-22). In God’s eyes these adjustments are moral evils requiring redemption (v. 21). A musical score is a human invention, an inventive use of musical sounds that can express human depravity and corruption just as man’s inventive use of atomic energy can. Musical sound is not beyond the reach of man’s ability to corrupt, because it is a part of God’s created order over which the sinner has dominion.

Second, musical arrangements influence human emotion and intellect. Emotionally and intellectually, man must love God (Deut. 6:5). Everything that influences our emotions and intellect is either morally good because it contributes to emotions and thoughts that are loving to God, or morally evil because it does the opposite.

(2) Christian music is a part of worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

The phraseology for this assertion comes from a conversation the Lord Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. This lady raised the topic of worship by noting the cultural differences between the Samaritans and the Jews in this regard (v. 20). Jesus bluntly informs her that the Jews are correct and that the Samaritans are wrong (v. 22). Clearly, worship can be done correctly and incorrectly, and cultural preferences cannot excuse incorrectness. Correct worship is worship in spirit and in truth. Worshipping in spirit is correlated positively with worshipping in truth. The spirit of worship and the truth of worship peacefully coexist; they are not in com-

petition with one another. Contrast this principle with the way that truth is correlated negatively with entertainment according to 2 Tim. 4:3-4. So worshipping in spirit is different from worshipping in entertainment. The former promotes truth; the latter interferes with it. Christian music mitigates entertainment value so as to maximize the influence of truth’s content. The spirit of worship comes from the meaning of truth, not from the enjoyment of the ear.

(3) Christian music puts a difference between the clean and the unclean.

The worship of Christians must be demonstrably different from the worship of the world (Deut. 12:29-32). The world loves and worships the desire of their eyes, the desire of their flesh, and their pride (1 John 2:15-17). Musical genres have been created to facilitate this worship, and Christian music utilizes a sound that is demonstrably different from these, putting a difference between the clean and the unclean (Lev. 10:10), avoiding conformity to this world (Rom. 12:2), and denying concord between Christ and Belial (2 Cor. 6:15).

(4) Christian music is a common confession.

The context of Col. 3:16 demonstrates that Christian music is a tool of Christian unity and reciprocity. We are to sing *to one another* the kind of songs Paul had in mind. He refers to a first century hymn as a common confession (1 Tim. 3:16). Christian music should not be personalized stylistically such that it no longer reflects the commonness of Christian confession. When Roseann Barr sang the National Anthem, her rendition communicated something other than the common confession of American love of country because she modified the song stylistically to make it more about her and less about our nation. Christian music avoids stylistic personalization in favor of an objectively accurate, reciprocally repeatable, and commonly shared confession of faith in Christ.