

Reigning Grace and . . .

Worship

Soli Deo Gloria

To God be the Glory

Readings on
Worship and Music



Waukesha Bible Church

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"Soli Deo Gloria"

Readings on Worship and Music
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Reigning Grace is the Theology of Waukesha Bible Church

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Contents

<i>Soli Deo Gloria</i> <i>Readings on Worship and Music</i>			Page
		<i>Preface</i>	i
		<i>An Introduction</i>	ii
1	Ps. 115	To Your Name Give Glory	1
2	Rev. 5:9	Musical Style Diversity and Worship	2
3	Ps. 107	Worship and Gratitude	4
4	Ps. 150	Celebrating the Grace of God Through Worship	6
5	Ps. 150	Music and the Worship of God	8
6	Matt. 22:37	Theologically Accurate Lyrics and Church Music	10
7	John 4:24	The Knowledge of God and Worship	12
8	Eph. 4:1-6	The Unifying Nature of Music	14
		<i>A Final Word</i>	16

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Preface

Since 1951 Waukesha Bible Church (WBC) has ministered to the Waukesha community. WBC is a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based Ministry. As a fellowship we are convinced that God is honored in the careful handling of His Word and in the acknowledgment that His Son, Jesus Christ, is enough for this life and in the life that is to come. We are equally convinced that God has entrusted us with this message. It is a message of life and not death; of freedom, not bondage. We wish to take this message to the ends of the earth until worshippers from every tribe, tongue, people and nation have been gathered to honor God.

A Word of Introduction

Local Churches have received from God a sacred trust. This trust is a mission. This mission is defined for us in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 2 Timothy 2:2. This same mission is pictured for us by the early church in the activity of the apostle Paul beginning in Acts 13:1. The mission is to duplicate herself in the lives of others. Church health is not defined by numerical size or budgetary well-being, but by the degree to which they are intentionally engaging in the reproducing of local churches. Churches birth churches. God's safeguard against doctrinal defect and pastoral apathy is through the strengthening and establishing of local churches.

What is the Purpose of this Study?

The intent of all study is to ask the hard questions and to seek Biblical answers. Parroting standard answers without learning the truth first hand will produce an anemic faith. May it please our heavenly Father to open our eyes to the magnitude of His grace so that we might understand all that we are in His Son and all that He is for us.

A word about Torn Veil Publications

Torn Veil Publications (TVP) is the distributing arm of WBC and exists to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of Scripture and to share Him with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. It is all designed as part of the WBC vision to spread a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based message to others.

An Introduction

What is worship? Worship is all that I am, responding to all that God is. Worship does not attribute to God worth. Worship affirms or recognizes that He is all He claims to be. Worship is revelation based. Worship works through the mind of man causing choices that result in an emotional response. Worship cannot exist where truth is absent. Thus worship is Bible sourced. Worship cannot exist where truth is not found. Worship is not about the worshipper, but the worshipped (Ps. 86:10). To the degree that worship is man-centered to that degree God is not worshipped. Worship has as its object the very person and work of God the Father through the person of Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible calls us to worship God. Some attempt to reduce worship to an action that can be monitored, dictated, managed, and controlled. But worship flows beyond the attempts at finite man to harness the infinite God. It exceeds the restrictions that imagination and ability place on it.

What is biblical worship? It is the refreshing drink of cool water to the thirsty soul. It is the contented feeling of the filled for those who come hungry (Pss. 42:1, 2; 63:1). Biblical worship refreshes the downtrodden, uplifts the down cast, and infuses with strength those who find themselves exhausted from the falsehood of an empty existence (Luke 4:18).

Whatever else one might think or conclude it would be to the detriment of biblical worship to assign it a stylistic expression. The way in which worship is expressed bows before the content of what is expressed and the accurate and necessary evaluation of the object before whom the worshipper bows (John 4:24).

The following thoughts were written in the cauldron of real life. The quest for those who wrote is to see Jesus Christ (John 12:21). Whether the mission is individual or corporate, it still has only one desire and that is to worship Him without distraction (Rev. 4; 5). It has been said, "When all is said and done and your life on earth is finished and the dust settles over your lifeless carcass, the only thing that will matter is the unadulterated, undiluted, and undistracted worship of Jesus Christ."

May these few short thoughts encourage the pursuit of a purer worship of Him who alone is worthy.

"To Your Name Give Glory"

*"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,
For the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"
(Psalm 115:1)*



Read Psalm 115

"Soli Deo Gloria" was the message etched beneath each composition by Johann Sebastian Bach. The desire to give God glory existed at the foundation of all he wrote. The phrase means "to God alone be the glory."

For me the importance of this message has been driven home during my daily journey through the Scriptures and especially where I now sit in both Numbers and the Psalms. Psalm 115:1 says, *"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"* The name of God represents who He is, the perfection of His character and attributes. The ultimate concern for the people of God must be that glory be given to God on the basis of who God alone is.

"To God
alone be
the glory"

Numbers 14 vividly portrays the importance of this theme through a story about our God and His rebellious people. After God's people refused to enter the Promised Land in light of the ominous report of ten faithless spies, God responds to Moses saying, "I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them." Moses, a picture of Christ to us, acts as a mediator between God and His covenant people. But instead of pleading the character of the *people* to God, Moses pleads the loving essence of *God* to God! In Numbers 14:15 Moses responds to God saying, *"Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give them'."* The concern of Moses was not for the well-being of the people but rather for the testimony of God among the nations. Moses goes on in verse 19 pleading the truth that, *"The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression . . ."* The worth of God, enshrined in his name, is the only hope for His people.

You can see the direct parallel between Numbers 14:15-18 and Psalm 115:1 as God's glory is the desired end of all things and that His glory is manifested in His steadfast love towards His people. It is because of who God is that we remain His people. As God's church, His steadfast love to us is Christ. Thus we worship God for faithfully loving us through His Son Jesus Christ and keeping the new covenant with His church. As a church we must care for the glory of God above our personal well-being, comfort, and diverse preferences. This singular pursuit will reveal the character of God to the unbelieving around us. For the glory of God's name among the nations let us say, *"not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"*

"Musical Style Diversity and Worship"

2

*"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals;
for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men
from every tribe and tongue and people and nation'" (Rev. 5:9).*

Read Revelation 5:9-14

Never has there been a time in history where music has so permeated every area of life. For the majority of people, music is a very real part of their everyday life. Music, like all inanimate objects bearing the imprint of God, has the power to influence mood, routines, and occasions, and to create scenes.

In this discussion we are taking the idea of "music" and considering it at one level. Music can be divided, at its broadest sense, into two categories. One category deals with style and the other with lyrical content. This short article is only considering music as it relates to style.

There is a recognized intrinsic power to musical style. While the power of music is found in its ability to minister (i.e., influence or "touch") the inner-most intimate part of one's individual makeup, the music itself does not bring a morality. Whether or not the response is moral or immoral is completely dependent on the recipient. Although music bears the imprint of God (i.e., music has His "character.") it is not an image-bearer (i.e., such as man). Since non-image bearing elements cannot have *intrinsic* morality, it would follow that musical style does not have any *intrinsic* ethical morality either. In saying all this, I do not mean to say that music cannot have an *assigned* morality; however, the assigned morality is first individual then corporate, and will potentially become cultural. Still, at no time is the assigned morality intrinsic to the musical style. Morality is simply assigned to it by the image-bearer.

A study of style is interesting. Consider with me several different styles. There is Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Folk, Jazz, Gospel, Rock & Roll, Blues, and Hip Hop.

For our own purposes, we could list "Hymns and Praise Choruses" as styles of music within the Evangelical community. Within every one of the aforementioned styles the quality of expression would be completely dependent on the author and then performer of the piece. Some styles would be classified as "good" music while others would be classified as "bad" music. Nonetheless, whether or not the music was good or bad would not be dependent on the style, but on the author and performer of the piece; there would be no "morality" to the music itself. Whether or not music is good or bad simply is merely a reference to the quality of the music. It may be good musically or bad musically, much like a sentence could be grammatically correct or incorrect. This does not imply morality or immorality, but rather, the quality of the grammatical structure. Any morality expressed by means of the music would be because of the morality of the image-bearer (i.e., the one hearing / playing) not the amorality of the music.

God is honored and glorified by the multiplicity of musical styles.

I am aware that there are strong preferences and opinions on both sides of the fence. Putting that aside for the moment, can we not marvel at the diversity within God's creative order? Think with me of the tremendous complexity and range within His people. I would venture a guess that in the next several hundred years more musical styles will be "birthed." Why is there this complexity, diversity, and range of musical style? Because, I believe God is honored and glorified by the multiplicity of musical styles.

It is narrow and perhaps arrogant to assume that God is only honored with the style preference of our ethnicity and culture either nationally or religiously. Revelation 5:9 says, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; **for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.**'"

When you consider the diversity of people to whom our missionaries minister, it would be a travesty to think these people must learn to sing our Anglo-Saxon style of music. God is pleased to hear the indigenous musical style of His global family.

Today let us thank Him and praise His name for and through the diversity of musical styles at our disposal. Let us magnify the multiplicity of expression in our pursuit of worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth.

"Worship and Gratitude"

*"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting" (Psalm 107:1).*

3

Read Psalm 107

Throughout the Psalms, the reader is invited to "Give thanks to the LORD." The idea behind "giving thanks" is to extend the hands, to revere, and thus, to worship. Returning thanks before the Father is to worship Him. It is appropriate for His people to worship their God. It is appropriate for the creature to worship their Creator. It is appropriate and fitting.

Today, as we contemplate worship, let us give thanks. Perhaps today you are struggling with the returning of thanks. Perhaps your situation is less than ideal. Perhaps you are living with failed expectations and crushed hopes. Yet listen to the thoughts of the Psalmist. Let us note why he is calling us to give thanks to the LORD.

- I thank You God for Your wonders (Ps 9:1; 105:1; 107:8, 15, 21, 31).
- I thank You God for You are good (Ps 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1).
- I thank You God for Your lovingkindness is everlasting (Ps 106:1; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31; 118:1, 29; 136:1, 3).
- I thank You God for Your holiness (Ps 30:4).

The Psalmist gives thanks for who God is and what He has done. It would appear that when all else fails, we can give thanks for God in the expression of His attributes.

However, the Psalmist does not stop there. He even tells us how to worship God.

- I will praise You with all my heart (Ps 9:1; 111:1).
- I will praise You with stringed instruments (Ps 33:2).
- I will praise You in the company of Your people (Ps 35:18; 111:1).
- I will praise You in the company of Your enemies (Ps 18:49).

The Psalmist has no intent of being exhaustive in the listing of actions. Psalm 150 assures us that worship is very diverse. The worship of God has many forms and is expressed in various ways. Sometimes worship is quiet and still while at other times it is loud and animated.

Whether it is quiet or loud, still or animated is never the point. Worship is not found in a ritual but in a relationship. Worship is to emanate from the heart of the individual. Worship is not a performance. Worship is never a spectator sport. The true worshipper is always a participant.

Let our gratitude
flow not from
what we have
received but from
who He is.

I am convinced that once we identify worship by form or method, we strip worship of being done in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Worship need not be impotent and sterile to be reverent, decent and orderly.

The Psalmist assures us that it is good to worship the Lord through thanksgiving (Ps 92:1). Let us remember to give thanks. Let our gratitude flow not from what we have received but from who He is. Let us praise God in our individual moments and in our corporate gatherings. Let us praise Him for His goodness. Friend, God is good all the time and His lovingkindness is everlasting.

"Celebrating the Grace of God Through Worship"

4

"Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!"
(Psalm 150:1-6)

Read Psalm 150

The Psalm before us accents four truths about worship.

First, we see the place of worship (v.1). Both within the "sanctuary" and without the "sanctuary" our God is to be praised. Corporate worship is a wonderful time of coming together to praise our God, yet regardless as to our location He is to be praised. Worship is the vehicle enabling the worshipper to glorify God. True worship is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not something I can do apart from Him. God is served in the unexpected, the mundane and the routine expressions of a life humbly lived (Mark 9:41; 1 Cor. 10:31). It is not the size of the service, but the motive of love for Christ that is worship (1 Cor. 13:1-3). It is safe to say that worship is more of an attitude than an action, though worship is verbal and visual. People verbalized their worship and visualized their worship in both word and works. True worship is an attitude that seeks expression in an action. True worship has a result of moving the worshipper's emotions.

Worship is more of an attitude than an action.

Second, we see the power for worship (v.2). God is to be praised because of His mighty deeds and His excellent greatness. His actions and His attributes give us ample cause to praise Him. To worship God is to affirm who He is, what He has done and His inherent and intrinsic right to rule over all things created. True worship declares God's majesty of being and manner of doing.

Third, we see the process to worship (vv.3-5). I am not convinced the list is exclusive or exhaustive. I believe the list is a representation of what can be used in the worship of our God. The means of worship are as diversified as individual personalities and as limitless as our infinite God. The only standard is God. Our benefit from worship is unavoidable. When true worship takes place the hurting are healed, the lonely are loved and the broken are anointed. One of our problems is that we use music and worship as synonyms. Music, however, is a vehicle for worship, but is not synonymous with worship. Worship is dependent on the heart and mind of the individual, not on the vehicle used by the individual. Worship is not dependent on music, but music can be used to worship.

The means of worship are as diversified as individual personalities and as limitless as our infinite God. The only standard is God.

Fourth, we see the participants in worship (v.6). Every one and everything is to praise the Lord. How inclusive is this statement? Consider Psalm 19:1 where “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” Also note Luke 19:40, “But Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!’” Friend, we could not stop the worship of God even if we wanted to.

God is worshipped through our fellowship. He is worshipped through our financial giving. God is worshipped through our singing. But all of these “things” are means to an end. **They are tools to be used in our desire to declare to Him our pleasure in Him.** When the “things” become our focus, then to that degree God is not worshipped. We come not to be entertained, but to affirm.

Corporate worship is the church gathered to affirm her complete and utter dependency on Him for her satisfaction through the systematic study of His Words to her and then to share that message with every tribe, tongue, people and nation - to say to all who hear and see that Jesus Christ is enough. He means more to me than my livelihood, my loyalties, my loved ones and my own life.

As I meditate on corporate worship my thoughts turn to worshiping during the Resurrection Season. What an absolute joy to experience with all of my senses what God is choosing to do during our time of corporate worship. May His presence continue to be “felt” and His voice “heard” as we open up His Word and our hearts to Him.

"Music and the Worship of God"

"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD" (Psalm 150:6).

5

Read Psalm 150

From the dawn of creation (Job 38:6, 7), through time (2 Chron. 29:28), and filling eternity (Rev. 15:3), God will be worshipped.

How unfortunate, when a timeless and global means of communication becomes an area of contention and division. We know that as long as we are in the flesh, we will disagree over musical taste. However, it is essential that we rise above our personal preferences, join in with God's global family, and sing our worship to Him.

As we continue to consider the area of music, are there principles we can glean from the Word of God to assist us in the selection of music? I believe there are several Scriptural guidelines for the selection of music in corporate singing.

First, I would suggest that music appeals to all that we are as image-bearers (Mark 12:30).

Our Lord does not isolate us into pieces, His point is simple, "**All that you are should love all that I am.**" Why should our musical expression be any less? If we were to break it down into parts, we would note how **not all parts have to be present, but all can be present.** By way of application, not every song needs to be sung with the same expression of passion, intimacy, intellect, and animation, but all of these parts are legitimate expressions in corporate singing. I should engage my intellect, my volition, and my emotion in the singing of songs before my King. He should excite my emotions. There should be occasion when I do get excited enough to shout, leap, and clap. Sometimes the song will move me to tears and express itself through verbal affirmation . . . AMEN!

Second, I would suggest that musical instrumentation should be as expressive, inclusive, and diverse, as one's culture can bear (Ps. 150).

I would love to have a fully staffed orchestra. I love the power of our choir. I can also appreciate the individual diversity of our various praise teams. The percussion (i.e., drums), strings (i.e., acoustic, electric, and bass guitars), and the joined vocalists all combine to lead and be led to the throne of God.

Third, I would suggest that our final principle is that worshipping God through music is always about Him, not us (Rev. 5:9).

The bottom line in corporate singing is not about you, but about Him. There is no question as to my own personal enjoyment and participation in singing and in listening, but it is not about me being seen or heard, but about Him being seen and heard. I want to see Him. I want to hear Him.

The bottom line in corporate singing is not about you, but about Him.

The way we select our music demands that we push beyond the visible and see Him who is invisible. It is about laying our hands on Him who is pure Spirit. As I read the following statement, I could only think of heaven.

“If our eyes were properly attuned with our ears, we could hear a sunset as well as see it. Or we could see the harmonious color of the song of the meadowlark as well as hear it. Perhaps some day God will allow us to do this thing.”

Friend, I believe there is coming a day when sin's hold on our ability to assimilate information will be removed. I believe the shadow that currently engulfs our senses and mind will be banished and we will be able to *see the color of music, taste sound, and feel its richness*. In such a context, our worship of God will surpass any perceived expectation. May we continue in our commitment to musical excellence in the proclamation of His worthy name.

"Theologically Accurate Lyrics and Church Music"

G

"And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind'" (Matt. 22:37).

Read Matthew 22:34-40

Many of us drive to work along a predictable path. Often we find ourselves halfway through our journey or arriving at our destination without even realizing that we stopped at several corners, waved to different people, changed the channel on the radio multiple times, and somehow (miraculously) arrived safely to our location! This has happened more times than I care to tell.

Unfortunately, we have the same tendency when it comes to the singing of spiritual songs. Sometimes we find ourselves singing something we do not actually believe in. Our problem is that we fail to engage our intellect.

We are so often overpowered by our style preference that we do not even consider the lyrical content and its theological accuracy.

It is good for us to remember that music divides into two broad categories. One deals with style and the other with lyrical content. We are so often overpowered by our style preference that we do not even consider the lyrical content and its theological accuracy. We base our value of the music solely on its stylistic expression instead of where more emphasis should be placed, on its theological accuracy.

Think on the following examples. Consider the open legalism contained in the first stanza of "*Trust and Obey*." "When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, What a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey." Unfortunately, it does not end there, "But we never can prove the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay; for the favor He shows and the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey (stanza four)." Many of us have grown up in churches singing this song, a song that keeps perpetuating the error of legalism. As we continue to sound out the depths of God's grace, the error of such a song should become more transparent.

This problem transcends all "style" preference. Consider the second stanza of, "*O, Lord You're Beautiful*." "O Lord you're beautiful, Your face is all I seek, **For when** your eyes are on this child, Your grace abounds to me." If we sing without making the lyrical adjustment, we can assume that there are times when the eyes of the Lord are not on His children. We can safely adjust the song so it is theologically sound by simply changing, "For when" to "Because." This adjustment accurately reflects a theology of grace as it relates to positional truth.

By regarding the lyrical content and then coupling it with a powerful stylistic, culturally relevant presentation, we have an opportunity to be deeply moved and a platform to worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

I believe an informed intellect expresses itself through a joyful sensory experience. This might be bodily movement, silent meditation, and/or verbal exclamation. While I do not dichotomize these areas, I do understand that my intellect must lead. I believe music is a powerful agent for good because it appeals so strongly to my emotions. Thus, theologically accurate lyrics coupled with a powerful musical style elicit from me a strong emotional response (again, what I consider strong is a preference, not a conviction). Almost without exception, corporate singing makes me happy because I am singing of Him who alone is worthy.

As a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based Fellowship we are convinced the ministry flowing from these core values is equally identified by them. Thus, we must ask ourselves, “Does the music we sing, play, and present *reflect* this? Is this what *identifies* our musical presentation? We are constantly working toward a musical presentation that is fully, “Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, and Grace-Based.”

The Lord is moving in our midst. May we rejoice in a fellowship that is pulsating with life. May we as a fellowship continue to dance in the reign of His grace.

"The Knowledge of God and Worship"



*"God is spirit and those who worship Him
must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).*

Read John 4:21-24

I would like us to once more reflect on worship and what true worship must entail.

First, let us consider our purpose for existing. Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Such questions address our most fundamental need. The answer to these questions will determine our focus and direction in life.

What is true of the individual is equally true of the corporate fellowship. A singular passion is to drive us. In answering the question, eternity should be the criteria of what establishes our mission. Personally, I believe the answer to all three questions noted above is singular in nature. I am a worshipper of God. I am here to worship Him. I, as a worshipper, will worship Him in heaven forever. The centerpiece of the Christian life is found in the worship of the eternal triune Godhead.

Consider two primary passages found in Revelation 4:8-11 and 5:11-14. In these two passages (coupled with Philippians 2:9-11), we have the reason we exist at all in one word: "Worship."

Second, what is true worship? Worship is the vehicle enabling the worshipper to glorify God. To worship God is to affirm who He is, what He has done, and His inherent and intrinsic right to rule over all things created. True worship declares God's majesty of being and manner of doing.

True worship is a fruit of the Spirit. Worship is not something we can do apart from Him. We have made worship too small. The worship of God is as diversified as personalities and cultures and as limitless as our infinite God.

We have made
worship too
small.

Third, let us consider the centrality of God in true worship. Worship is about Him, not us. Anything that accentuates the individual and detracts from Him is to be avoided. Herod's tragic end highlights the folly of receiving that which is only proper for God (Acts 12:21).

Every facet of our corporate worship must without question reflect an accurate image of who God is, what He has done, and His right to rule over all things created. Every effort should be made to downplay our role in the worship service. We are not there to be seen, but to see Him who is God Almighty. We are not there to be heard, but to hear Him whose voice brings healing to the hurting.

God is always glorified in and through all things, though He is not always worshipped. This, however, will change (Matt. 6:10; Phil. 2:0-11).

Fourth, expositional preaching is true worship. The centerpiece of corporate worship is the exposition of biblical truth. True worship is truth-based and God-centered and is exegetically based and expositionally delivered. We come not to be entertained, but to affirm whom He is, what He has done, and His inherent and intrinsic right to rule over all things created. True worship is joyful and sobering because of one's exposure to Christ and grace.

Fifth, the worship of God takes place through "jars of clay". Sectarianism must yield to unity in true worship. Although cultural relevance, preference and personality are present, they must be secondary. True worship is not consumed by form or style. The form of worship was significant in the Old Testament. In this dispensation, there is only a two-fold criterion for worship: spirit and truth.

True worship acknowledges God in our midst. We gather to receive Him. We give God nothing He lacks. We get from God everything we need.

We must be vigilant in our pursuit of Him. What we do can never become routine and mundane. It must be vital and dynamic. Our God is an awesome God, and our worship of Him should reflect this.

As we reflect on our knowledge base and the increasing of it, let us worship God for who He is, what He has done, what He is for us, and who we are in Him.

We gather to
receive Him.

We give God
nothing He lacks.

We get from God
everything we
need.

"The Unifying Nature of Music"

"There is one body and one Spirit,
just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all
who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).



Read Ephesians 4:1-6

One's identity in this modern era is marked by many superficial habits and tendencies one of them being the style or "genre" of music they listen to. Listeners rally around such unimportant qualifiers as "urban" and "country" in an attempt to not only identify what they listen to but who they are as well. At what point should we divide into small groups over our tastes in music? Before we answer this question let's take a minute to understand music itself, and thus the nature of our question.

Music can be defined as: the arrangement of notes into melodies that are kept in time by a structure of rhythm. The process of arranging these notes into melodies is accomplished through the intellect and emotions of man, but where do the elements of tone and rhythm come from originally? Tone is heard in nature from the beautiful singing of a bird to the babbling of a stream, and even winds whistling through leaves. Man has a God-given ear for and understanding of tone, its how created things communicate. Man has taken these tones which God created and classified them into pitches (i.e. A, A#, B, C, etc.). It is vital for us to recognize that man always "creates" with elements that God made out of nothing. In short, only God creates *ex nihilo*, or "out of nothing". This is true with rhythm as well. Watching an animal run across an open expanse or listening to your own heartbeat will reveal the constant rhythms programmed into all of creation by God. Man having an ear and understanding of these things has classified rhythms by patterns (i.e. 4/4, 3/4, 6/8 etc.)

Realizing that man composes music using elements previously created by God, let us discuss the nature of music. Through the means of tone, creation communicates and via rhythm we stay in step. Music is communication in that it expresses the intellect and emotions of man. Not only is music communication but it is a corporate means of communicating. Music provides the opportunity for a community of people to say the same things, the same way, at the same time. Theology has been stated back and forth between theologians and philosophers throughout the history of the church, but God's people have always used music to proclaim truth together to God. Indeed, "proclaiming truth together to God" is the unifying purpose of music. In a normal church service an elder may pray to God, a member may give a testimony to God, the Pastor will give a message about God, and the congregation attempts to stay together while reciting a creed or passage of scripture but it is only during a song that the entire community together proclaims truth; the same truth! Now we see music in its proper light. Music exists not as the end of our worship but as *a* means; it is simply a tool to bring about unity in worship.

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Yet in the midst of this truth and opportunity there lies an age old struggle. Satan, like all created beings, cannot create from nothing; so he twists things which are elementally good in order to divide.

Music in the church has become something to divide over; how erroneous; how hideous the outcome of not understanding what music really is!

For us as a church there can be but one pursuit; to know and enjoy the Glory of God in His Son Jesus Christ the Head of His Church. We are one body and to our great joy we will unite and dwell in true community and love. At what price should we divide over music? Well, we have come to see that the question is flawed for division is not a reality in the nature of music. Division is a lie, a game of twisting; unity is the only pure expression of music.

A Final Word

Well . . . what did you find? Or perhaps what found you? In some ways we have come to believe that worship is a man generated activity or perhaps a synergistic activity at best, where “if I do my part, God will do His.” True worship, biblical worship, is a visitation of the divine into the world of His creation. It is not defined by your volition or by your emotion. It is only defined by who God is and what He has done and this is only knowable through the written text of His holy Word, the Bible.

Biblical worship exalts Christ for it has found that to worship Him is to worship the Father (John 10:30; 17:11). Biblical worship is Bible driven (Luke 24:27; John 5:39). God is not impressed with our sincerity (1 Kings 18:26-29). God is neither moved nor driven by the emotional sensationalism of the uninformed mind (Matt. 23:23). Biblical worship understands that God speaks of Himself in the text He has preserved for us. Biblical worship sees worship as a journey with the Bible being an inerrant, infallible, and immediately relevant road map. Biblical worship is global impacting in that all cultures represented by every tongue, tribe, people, and nation are capable and will ultimately worship the King of kings and Lord of lords (Phil. 2:10, 11; Rev. 4; 5). Biblical worship is grace sourced. Biblical worship realizes that unless God condescends, stoops toward the worshipper such actions on our part will never be acceptable. God the Holy Spirit opens the “eyes” of worshippers so that they “see” Jesus in the text of Scripture and through the median of creation so that as He is confessed in creed God the Father is glorified (Ps. 119:18).

Uninformed intellect produces unbridled emotionalism where the self-deceived have come to believe that ardent acts of energy expended toward the letter of the law honors God (2 Cor. 3:6). God is unmoved by such things. Those who worship the true God must worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). What defines biblical worship is not my subjective emotional experience, but the objective criteria of God’s unchanging Word.

I trust as you have journeyed through these few short readings God the Holy Spirit has been pleased to open your eyes so that you might see Him who is altogether lovely.