

**Biblical Worship**  
*Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training*  
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**Introduction:**

There are few subjects in the modern church that elicits as much controversy as the subject of worship. Many larger churches now have three separate services in an effort to please the entire congregation, a contemporary service, a traditional service, and a blended service. Most today declare it to be a simple matter of personal preference. But is it that simple? Does God declare His worship to be a matter of personal preference for human beings to decide or does He have a particular way in which He will be worshipped? It is a matter of the greatest importance because it involves the greatest activity for man, the worship of God. The purpose of this study is to show that God *has* ordered the proper way in which He will be worshipped and to examine the elements of this true Biblical worship. As a part of this study we will include the subject of music within the context of worship.

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**I. Worship Essentials**

- A. There are two aspects to Biblical Worship
1. The first aspect of worship is submission (the very heart of worship)  
**Psalm 95:6** – "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."
    - a. Hebrew - שָׁחָה (shachah) – to bow down, to prostrate oneself
    - b. Greek - προσκυνέω – (proskuneo) - to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence, in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance

2. The second aspect of worship is praise  
**Psalm 7:17** – "I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high."

**Psalm 34:3** – "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."

- a. Praise is an expression of thanksgiving
- b. True worship is motivated by gratitude

The Hebrew word for praise is יָדָה (yadah) which is often translated "to give thanks"

- c. This is our highest duty.

*Shorter Catechism:*

Q. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

**1 Corinthians 10:31** – "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

The word translated "glory" is δόξα (doxa) which can also be translated "praise."

- B. In true worship God is the focus.
  1. Worship is not primarily for us. Worship is to be directed to God. True worship must be God-centered
  2. We come as His lowly subjects and bow in total subjection. This is the aspect of worship most neglected today. For many today man is the focus. Our feelings are the primary consideration - having our needs met. They insist that worship needs to be an uplifting experience – man being uplifted instead of God. This is why for many preaching is seen as irrelevant in worship. Preaching calls upon man to bow, submit, and obey.
- C. True worship is a matter of the heart
  1. True worship is our expression of our love for God and thus comes from the heart. Worship that doesn't come from the heart is rejected by God. **Isaiah 29:13-14** – "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: <sup>14</sup> Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid."
  2. John Calvin – "Hence it is perfectly clear that neither words nor singing (if used in prayer) are of the least consequence, or avail one iota with God, unless they proceed from deep feeling in the heart. Nay, rather they provoke his anger against us, if they come from the lips and throat only, since this is to abuse his sacred name, and hold his majesty in derision." (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, Moody Press, Volume 2, P. 180)
- D. Worship is the highest priority of the church
  1. The church has many duties including evangelism, discipleship, and benevolence. None of these take priority over worship
  2. Worship is the only activity of the church that will survive into eternity

- E. True worship demands both Corporate worship and private worship
1. Private Worship – God expects every believer to spend time alone seeking Him, confessing his sin, and expressing gratitude in adoration  
Daily worship includes prayer, praise, confession, Bible reading, Bible study, and meditation. Private worship is essential for the proper expression of corporate worship.
  2. Corporate Worship – The public gathering of God's people as they bow in submission and homage before God and offer up the praises of His majesty and glory.
- F. True worship demands preparation
1. Approaching God properly demands spiritual preparation.
    - a. Prayer and meditation  
**Psalm 19:14** – “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”
    - b. Confession  
**1 John 1:6** – “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:”  
**1 John 1:9** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. “
  2. The cares of life offer many distractions. We cannot expect to rush into the presence of God without spending time in silence before Him.  
**Psalm 46:10** – “Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”  
**Psalm 4:4** – “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”
  3. Entering into the Holy of Holies should be considered a profound act of entering into the presence of God.
    - a. Herod’s Temple had five distinct levels from the Outer Court to the Holy of Holies.
      - (1) The Outer Court was the closest many of the Israelites ever came to the Holy of Holies. It was the common place of worship and the place where friends greeted each other and daily discussions were held.
      - (2) The Holy of Holies was the place the high priest went once a year on the Day of Atonement, and only after careful preparation. It was the dwelling place of God.
    - b. Sadly, although in Christ we have access into the Holy of Holies, many Christians (figuratively speaking) never proceed beyond the outer court of greeting each other. They do not come expecting to come into the presence of God
- G. The Bible presents a balanced view of approaching God - One of fear and reverence but also of boldness and confidence
1. We must approach Him with high reverence and godly fear.  
**Hebrews 12:28-29** – “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: <sup>29</sup> For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

2. We must also approach Him as our a child approaches his father
  - a. As His children we have immediate access  
**Ephesians 3:12** – “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”
  - b. Access before God’s throne must never lead to familiarity

## II. Truth is an essential aspect of worship

**John 4:23** – “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

- A. God must be worshipped in accordance with His revelation of Himself.  
Our worship of God must be consistent with His character
  1. God is holy - The Bible reveals God as perfect in holiness, separate from His creation  
**Isaiah 6:1-3** – “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. <sup>3</sup> And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”
  2. God is a Spirit  
Charles Hodge – “The two fundamental principles of the religion of the Bible are first, that there is only the living and true God, the maker of heaven and earth, who has revealed Himself under the name Jehovah; secondly, that this God is a Spirit, and, therefore, incapable of being conceived of or represented under a visible form. The first commandment, therefore, forbids the worship of any other being than Jehovah; and the second, the worship of any visible object whatever. (*Systematic Theology, Vol. 3, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, P.290*)
- B. Our worship must be consistent with the character of man
  1. The Bible reveals man to be sinful, separate from God, and subject to His wrath.  
**Romans 3:10-12** – “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: <sup>11</sup> There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. <sup>12</sup> They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”
  2. Because of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, worship is only possible as Christ stands as the Mediator of God's people.  
**John 14:6** - Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
  3. True worship is an activity of the saints. Lost people are incapable of worshipping God.
    - a. Worship services do not exist for the purpose of evangelism
    - b. Worship services should be arranged in such a way that aid believers in worshipping God. There is no warrant for organizing worship services to appeal to unbelievers.

## Governing Principles for Worship

Various approaches:

1. Pragmatic approach - Proper worship is determined by whatever works. Nothing is to be excluded as long as it produces the necessary predetermined results. That which is artistically pleasing or emotionally satisfying is to be accepted regardless of whether or not it is founded upon Biblical truth. Music is usually the focus of such worship.
2. The Roman Catholic "ecclesiastical " approach – whatever the church allows is correct.
3. The Lutheran and Anglican approach – Whatever the Bible does not forbid is correct.
4. The Puritan Principal or "Regulative Principle" – Whatever the Bible does not command is forbidden. All worship must be governed by clear biblical standards.

## Biblical Worship

Second London Confession of 1689, Chapter 22:1

“The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good, and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.”

- I. The Bible is the standard for worship – The Regulative Principle
  - A. The Reformers and, later, the Puritans held that the acceptable way to worship God was instituted by God Himself. The Word of God provides the only authority for worship; all worship must conform to the clear teaching of Scripture. God sets the parameters on what is permitted in worship, not man.
    1. This was consistent with the principle of Sola Scriptura articulated by the Reformers. The regulative principle was an application of Sola Scriptura.
    2. John Calvin – “We may not adopt any device [in our worship] which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunctions of him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have him approve of our worship, this rule, which he everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed . . . God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word.”  
(*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*. Chicago; Moody Press, P. 178)
    3. The simplicity of worship styles of most of the evangelical traditions including Baptists and Presbyterians is the result of the application of the regulative principle.
  - B. The regulative principle is clearly taught in Scripture.
    1. God rejected Cain’s offering of the fruit of the ground and accepted Abel’s animal sacrifice not because of He had *prohibited* man from offering fruit, but because He did not *command* it.
    2. Nadab and Abihu were killed because they offered strange fire which God “Commanded not.”  
**Leviticus 10:1-2** – “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. <sup>2</sup> And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”

3. God stated this principle clearly  
**Deuteronomy 12:32** – “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”
  4. The first four of the Ten Commandments describe various aspects of our worship of God
    - 1<sup>st</sup> – forbids the worship of any other God.
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> – forbids even the worship of the true God through the use of idols.
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> – forbids the improper or irreverent use of God’s name.
    - 4<sup>th</sup> – commands the setting apart of one day for the worship of God.
  5. This is consistent with our Lord’s teaching
    - a. He stated that true worship would be according to truth. Truth is defined by God’s Word, not the imagination of man  
**John 4:23** – “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”
    - b. Before He left His disciples He commanded them to teach “them [the nations] to observe all things that *I have commanded you*” (Mt. 28:20).
  6. The regulative principle is stated succinctly in Paul’s second epistle to Timothy,  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17** – “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
- C. To reject the regulative principle is to allow our hearts to decide the correct way to worship God.
1. The Bible makes a clear statement about the heart of man,  
**Jeremiah 17:9** – “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”
  2. Joe Morecraft – “Human beings neither have the right nor the competence to dictate to a sovereign God how He ought to be worshipped. Why not? Because of our creature hood and our sinfulness we are totally unqualified to determine how God is to be worshipped or to have any say or to make any suggestions in the matter. We are simply to find out what God wants and then do it. Only God has the prerogative to determine how He is to be worshipped and served by His creatures. It is the height of arrogance, superstition, and idolatry to think we have any prerogative to determine how God is to be worshipped. How dare the clay dictate or suggest anything to the Potter.”  
(*How God Wants Us to Worship Him*, Page 10)
  3. We are to worship God acceptably according to His commands.  
**Hebrews 12:28-29** <sup>28</sup> Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: <sup>29</sup> For our God *is* a consuming fire.”
- C. The regulative principle is not without difficulties – for example, the use of musical instruments
1. Spurgeon argued against the use of the organ on biblical grounds

2. There are some who hold that the Biblical Christian church should use no instruments at all.  
 Brian Schwertley – " The use of musical instruments in public worship today is almost universal. Pianos and organs have been used for generations to set the 'proper' mood during the service and have been used to accompany the singing of hymns. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century draws to a close many churches have adopted the use of full-fledged bands with electric guitars, electric bass, keyboard, horns, and drums. Rock, pop, and country style bands are used as tools of church growth. Church growth materials argue that having a good band with upbeat music and worship songs will attract visitors and keep people coming back. Although musical instruments are powerful tools in the arsenal of emotional manipulation, does God's word authorize their use in public worship in the new covenant era? A study of the use of musical instruments in the Bible reveals that the use of musical instruments in worship is connected to the sacrificial system and is an aspect of the ceremonial law. A brief survey of the use of musical instruments in the Bible will prove this assertion."

- In other words, all Biblical examples of instruments were found in connection with the Temple worship and the ceremonial system that the New Covenant has abrogated. The New Testament church patterned its worship after Synagogue worship in which singing was done a cappella.  
 3 John MacArthur, while upholding the regulative principle, uses "instruments of all kinds, from the trumpet and the harp to loud cymbals" (*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*. Chicago; Moody Press, P. 180). He cites as his support Psalm 150.

**Psalm 150:3-6** – "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. <sup>4</sup> Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. <sup>5</sup> Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. <sup>6</sup> Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."

- D. Many of the difficulties are solved when the differences between the ordinance of worship and the circumstance of worship are understood.

**Second London Confession of 1689, 1:6** – "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

1. Worship ordinances are those activities received by divine revelation. Every worship ordinance is appointed by God. The church is obligated to obey all of God's worship ordinances and has no authority to add to or take away from these ordinances. God clearly defines those elements that are to be contained in worship.

2. The circumstances of worship refer not to worship content but to things incidental to worship. They are not dependent upon explicit instruction from God but rather on Christian prudence and those things “common to human actions and societies.”
  - a. These incidentals include such things as furnishings, buildings, times of meetings etc.
    - The Bible does not specify pews or chairs, carpet or tile, incandescent or fluorescent lights, etc.
    - The Bible does not command the use of air conditioning, yet air conditioning is common to our society and not excluded in the regulative principle of worship.
    - The Bible does not command the times of our services, but human prudence would prohibit us from scheduling the Sunday morning worship service at 5:00 a.m.
  - b. These incidentals are not to be confused with God's order for worship.

- E Most evangelicals today reject the regulative principle
1. Most churches today fall somewhere between the Pragmatic and the Lutheran approach to worship.
  2. Sadly, for many “experience” and popular opinion have supplanted the authority of Scripture. Theology is declining in importance in many evangelical churches. If a worship style produces the desired effect (making people feel good about being there and increasing the number of attendees) it is considered proper.

## II. The Regulative Principle in practice – The Elements of Biblical Worship/ Worship Ordinances

- A. Prayer  
**Acts 2:42** – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
- B. The reading of Scripture  
**1 Timothy 4:13** – “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”
- C. The singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs  
**Ephesians 5:19** – “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”
- D. The receiving of an offering  
**Matthew 5:23** – “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;”  
**1 Corinthians 16:2** – “Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”
- E. The proclamation of God's Word
  1. The preaching of God's Word must take priority in worship
  2. Preaching is an essential part of worship – both of submission and praise
    - a. As the Holy Spirit applies God's Word to us we bow and submit.
    - b. As God is revealed in His Word we praise and adore Him
  3. The regulative principle was the guiding force in the pulpit being moved to the center in Protestant churches

4. John MacArthur – “Preaching is an irreplaceable aspect of all corporate worship. In fact, the whole church service should revolve around the ministry of the Word. Everything else is either preparatory to, or a response to, the exposition of Scripture. When drama, music, comedy, or other activities are allowed to usurp the preaching of the Word, true worship inevitably suffers. Moreover, a ‘church’ where the Word of God is not regularly and faithfully preached is no true church.”  
(*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*. Chicago; Moody Press, P. 182).

F. The ordinances

**Acts 2:42** – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

**Acts 20:7** – “And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

III. The Regulative Principle and Music

**Colossians 3:16** – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. “

A. Few today see the vital connection between the Word of God and music in the worship service

1. There is a crisis today in the use of music in our worship services. The greatest cause is the decline in theology.

Gary L. W. Johnson – “It should not come as a big surprise that when theology is obviated, churches become preoccupied with other things. Entertainment in the form of drama and comedy skits replaces preaching, which, unless it is entertaining, is often described as boring. More and more stress is placed on music style that attempts to evoke an emotional response simply for its own sake.”

(*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*. Chicago; Moody Press, P. 61)

2. The Bible places a direct link between Scripture and music

**Colossians 3:16** – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

(The NIV makes an unfortunate separation between the teaching of the Word and the singing

<sup>NIV</sup> **Colossians 3:16** – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”)

B. What they sang - "Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs"

There are two schools of thought

1. Some believe that the phrase "Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs" refers to the Book of Psalms and so sing only from the Psalter. Using the Psalms alone is referred to as “exclusive Psalmody.”

a. In defense of this position they point to the books of Ephesians and Colossians. In both Paul is writing to Greek readers.

- b. The Old Testament for Greek speaking people would have been the Greek Septuagint which labeled the 150 Psalms alternately as “Psalms” or “Hymns” or “Spiritual Songs.”
- c. Brian Schwertley – “ The regulative principle of worship is crucial in understanding exclusive Psalmody, for while there is abundant biblical evidence that Psalms were used for praise in both the Old and New Testament eras, there is no evidence in the Bible that God’s people ever used uninspired human compositions in public worship. Churches which use uninspired hymns in public worship must prove that such a practice has biblical warrant from either a command, historical example or by deduction.”
2. Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs each describe a different aspect of worship music.
- a. Psalms - ψαλμός (psalmos) – referring to the Psalms which were meant to be sung.  
This places great emphasis on the need to sing the Psalms in our services. Churches today are clearly in error in their neglect of the Psalms in worship.
- b. Hymns - ὕμνος (humnos) - a sacred song, hymn – songs which focus upon the praise of God.
1. Augustine said that a hymn must have three essentials:
    - it must be sung
    - it must be praise
    - it must be to God
  2. Example:  
"All Creatures of our God and King, Lift up your voice and with us sing Alleluia, alleluia"
  3. When the Disciples went out to the mount of Olives they "hymned" – although many commentators believe that the word “hymn” here refers to a Psalm from the “Hallel” (i.e., Ps. 113-118).
- c. Spiritual Songs - πνευματικός ᾠδή (pneumatikos oday) - songs of a spiritual nature probably teaching certain spiritual truths doctrinal, historical etc.
- C. Content of worship music  
Paul uses several verbs which are very enlightening:
- **Colossians 3:16** – “teaching” - διδάσκω (didasko)
  - **Colossians 3:16** – “admonishing” - νουθετέω (noutheteo)
  - **Ephesians 5:19** – "speaking to yourselves" - λαλέω (laleo)
  - **Ephesians 5:19** – "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;" - ᾄδω (ado), ψάλλω (psallo)
1. Worship music should be instructive; it should have the quality of teaching the saints Biblical truths.
    - a. The words are of far greater importance than the music – Paul stresses this by using the word translated "speaking" – λαλέω (laleo) - to use words in order to declare one's mind and disclose one's thoughts.  
John Calvin – “We must, however, carefully beware, lest our ears be more intent on the music than our minds on the spiritual

meaning of the words. . . songs composed merely to tickle and delight the ear are unbecoming the majesty of the Church, and cannot but be most displeasing to God.”

(John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, Moody Press, Volume 2, P. 182)

- b. As most people consider music they define it in the context of entertainment, i.e. how it creates feelings of pleasure. Most worship music is chosen on the basis of how it will make the congregation feel.
- c. One of the important purposes of church music is the maturity of the saints.

Calvin Johansson – “Following after the church’s mission to foster Christian maturity through evangelism, teaching, and worship, it is logical to assume that in enabling men and women to praise God, music ministry’s fundamental task is the maturing of the saints of God. That it has other functions does not diminish this important purpose . . . If maturity is God’s plan for his children, let congregations, pastors, and musicians cooperate by using music which will help enrich God’s people. To its shame, the music of the church has often served to make Christians more immature than mature.”

(*Discipling Music Ministry* Peabody: Hendrickson, P. 18)

- 2. Worship music should admonish and warn the saints  
This doesn't settle well with today's "feel good" worship
- 3. Worship music should be sung from the heart  
The words "making melody" is from the Greek word ψάλλω (psallo) – literally, to pluck or cause to vibrate as of the string of a musical instrument
  - a. In view of the Christian resistance to the mystery cults as well as the Pharisaic aversion to musical instruments in worship there is little likelihood that this is referring to musical instruments.
  - b. note: "with our hearts" - Literally we are to play our hearts unto the Lord. Our heart has become our instrument of praise.
  - c. It is not worship if you are merely mouthing the words without singing from the heart.
- 4. Worship music must be examined on this Biblical basis.  
Does it cause the Word of God to dwell in us richly?  
Does it teach and admonish us?  
Do we sing it with gratitude in our hearts to God?

#### D. Worship Music and Theology

- 1. The Levitical musicians were ministers of the Word  
**1 Chronicles 25:1** – “Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was:”
  - a. Psalm 50 illustrates the theological depth of understanding as well as the powerful admonition in the music of these men.
  - b. Leadership was withheld from these men until the age of 30  
**1 Chronicles 23:3**

- c. In **1 Kings 4** we are told that Solomon was a musician, writing 1005 Psalms (which have been lost). We are also told and that he was wiser than the musicians, Ethan and Heman. This implies that except for Solomon, two of the wisest men who ever lived were musicians.

**1 Kings 4:30-32** - “And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. <sup>32</sup> And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.”

- d. Clearly, wisdom and understanding were an essential qualifications for Israel's musicians, a truth which the regulative principle should cause us to take very seriously.

2. Our music should present clear theology

**Colossians 3:16** – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ”

- a. The early church sang mostly chants and hymns. During the reformation Luther's theology was transmitted in his hymns. The churches of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries continued to place a high doctrinal emphasis in their hymns as demonstrated by Isaac Watts, John Wesley, and Charles Wesley. As the church moved into the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, hymnody, influenced by the evangelical crusades of men like D. L. Moody, was becoming lighter in doctrinal content with greater repetition. This continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a greater emphasis upon evangelism instead of the edification of the saints. The last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was influenced by Christian radio. The trend has been toward praise choruses with a greater emphasis upon entertainment and pleasing those in the pew. Theology in music has become secondary to style.
- b. If we are to follow the regulative principle, worship music must minister the Word of God. Music void of sound theology has no place in Christian worship

IV. Problems With Contemporary Music and Worship

A. Contemporary worship music tends to foster immaturity

1. Even John Frame in his book defending contemporary Christian music admits its appeal to the immature.
- “CWM is Christian music that is immediately accessible—to the young as well as the old, to the immature as well as the mature. Therefore I have argued in chapter 5, it is an extremely valuable tool for teaching the immature, for helping the immature to become mature. . . . The genre of children's Christian music is intended, bit by bit, to instruct them and raise them out of immaturity. For the sake of that task, it is better that children sing some children's hymns, rather than adult hymns alone. The same can be said of CWM.”

(John Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music*, Philipsburg, Eerdmans – p.164)

2. If contemporary Christian music best suited for immature Christians, at what point do they set it aside for that which will build them to maturity?
- B. Much of what is called contemporary music is primarily commercial
1. Most contemporary Christian music is produced outside the church and managed by secular business. Financial profits are a great motivation. They want music that is well received, music that sells.
  2. Leonard Peyton – “A great deal of the problem with much contemporary Christian music is that it is primarily commercial, which means that it is designed to please the greatest number of people without reminding them of the hard, demanding side of Christian faith and discipleship. Some lives have been wrecked by this music, and the growth I personally have seen come from it has been hothouse growth. It is luxuriant and beautiful, but it is short lived, and it doesn’t help us in hard times.”  
(*Reforming Our Worship Music* Wheaton: Crossway Books, P. 13)
- C. The “Style” of Contemporary Worship Music Detracts From the Content
1. The light, bouncy style detracts from the sober content of the words  
Leonard Peyton – “Some might object that they know many Scripture songs or praise and worship choruses that contain Scripture passages, perhaps even contemporary musical settings for beefy hymn texts. But even these are failures because the music is light, bouncy, entertainment-type music; the aesthetic *form* communicates fun and good times to most people rather than serious worship of Almighty God. Furthermore, the form may be heard with more lasting impact than the words, no matter how correct and noble the ideas in these songs may be.”  
(*Reforming Our Worship Music* Wheaton: Crossway Books, P. 14.)
  2. For many in the contemporary worship movement, their choice of music style is based primarily upon those songs which are most gratifying to their fleshly appetites – in other words, those songs which make them “feel” good. All other styles are denounced as, “boring.”  
Leonard Peyton – “Gene Edward Veith points out that the word ‘bored’ did not enter English vocabulary until the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Moreover, Veith sows that the corresponding biblical concept of boredom is sloth. In other words, boredom is primarily the hearer’s problem, not the speaker’s.”  
(*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*. Chicago; Moody Press, P. 204)
- D. Contemporary Christian music is more interested in making people feel good than in presenting Biblical truth.
1. Pietism had a negative effect upon intrinsic art. Pietism was a German movement of the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries that ultimately placed a higher emphasis on subjective experience than upon theology. Prior to this period art forms had intrinsic value. In other words, art was produced simply for its beauty rather than the response of the audience. Great composers were interested in producing great music. With the influence of Pietism, music began to be judged by the effect it produced upon people.
  2. Today we are far less concerned about the quality of the music and more concerned about the subjective experience; how it makes us feel. Much of the contemporary Christian music is emotionalistic, pleasure oriented, and

doctrinally empty. The important thing is that we feel good about ourselves and our worship.

3. Today, many in the church growth movement see music “style” as a key factor in whether or not a church grows. This is a terrible change from the early church that “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine;” the church that grew by 3000 in one day.
  - a. Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Church* confirms this modern philosophy,
 

“The style of music you choose to use in your service will be one of the most critical (and controversial) decisions you make in the life of your church. It may also be the most influential factor in determining who your church reaches for Christ and whether or not your church grows (emphasis mine).”

*(Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement, Page 46)*
  - b. John MacArthur – “Even the music and skits are carefully chosen to try to make unbelievers comfortable . . . The whole point is to make the church “user friendly.” That is a term borrowed from the computer industry. Applied to the church, it usually describes a ministry that is benign and utterly non-challenging. In practice, it has become an excuse for importing worldly amusements into our church in an effort to try to attract non-Christian “seekers” or “unchurched Harrys” by appealing to their fleshly interests.”

E. Contemporary Christian music has lessened the contrast between the church and the world.

1. People centered worship that appeals to the emotions and needs of the congregation clouds the Biblical expectation God places upon them. The focus is upon self: What I want, What I need. The Gospel demands dying to self.
 

**Luke 9:23** – “And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
2. There is a tendency today for people to feel they have a right to bring *their* preferences into the church and that God will accept it. Worldly music has found its way into the church because people believe the popular tunes they hear and enjoy on the radio should be acceptable in worship.
 

Where does God give us permission to follow the standards of the world?

**2 Corinthians 6:16-18** – “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup> Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, <sup>18</sup> And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”
3. Dan Lucarini – “The bottom line was that we simply wanted to use *our* music in the church, not what we perceived as our parents’ or grandparents’ music. We have the same self-centered, self-indulgent spirit

of the 1960's and 1970's but now it has been given a veneer of Christian dedication.

*(Why I left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement, Page 63)*

F. Contemporary Christian music and worship fosters an unbiblical familiarity with God.

1. We must approach God with a holy fear.

**Deuteronomy 6:13** – “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.”

**Hebrews 12:28-29** – “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: <sup>29</sup> For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

**Ecclesiastes 12:13** – “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.”

2. The popular slogan “NO FEAR” has found its way into the church.

**Psalms 36:1** – “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes. “

3. Dan Lucarini – “The baby boomers banned *fear* from church because it conflicted with our self-esteem and our acceptance doctrine, but it is still there in the Bible.”

*(Why I left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement, Page 58)*

V. Is Music Amoral (neither morally good nor bad)?

A. Rick Warren holds the position that there is no such thing as Christian music. It's the words that make it spiritual.

“Worship has nothing to do with the style or volume or speed of a song. God loves all kinds of music because He invented it all—fast and slow, loud and soft, old and new. You probably don't like it all but God does! If it is offered to God in spirit and truth, it is an act of worship. Christians often disagree over the style of music used in worship, passionately defending their preferred style as the most biblical or God honoring. But there is no biblical style! There are no musical notes in the Bible; we don't even have the instruments they used in Bible times. Frankly, the music style you like best says more about *you*—your background and personality—than it does about God. One ethnic group's music can sound like noise to another. But God likes variety and enjoys it all. There is no such thing as ‘Christian’ music; there are only Christian lyrics. It is the words that make a song sacred, not the tune. There are no spiritual tunes. If I played a song for you without the words, you'd have no way of knowing if it were a ‘Christian’ song.” Warren, Rick.

*The Purpose-Driven Life.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 65-66.

1. Rick Warren's position that God invented all music is flawed. In the sense that God is Creator of all things it is accurate, yet God is not the Author of sin. Man naturally has the propensity to “invent” evil things.

**Romans 1:28-30** – “And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; <sup>29</sup> Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity;

whisperers,<sup>30</sup> Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents . . .”

2. A cursory look at Scripture will show that God does not necessarily *love* all music. The first reference to music in the Bible comes from the descendants of Cain, the ungodly line of men, in contrast to the descendants of Seth who called upon the name of God.  
**Genesis 4:21** – “And his brother’s name *was* Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.”
  3. It isn’t likely God loved Jubal’s music.  
Rick Warren’s position is flawed in supposing that *all* music is acceptable in the worship of God. None is to be considered wrong. This is to deny that music has an effect upon the hearer.
- B. Music can carry a message without lyrics
1. Most who have been brought up around rock and roll music must honestly admit its sensual qualities. One would not expect classical music to be played in a bar. Rock and roll was created by immoral men for immoral purposes. It came into being during an era of depravity and rebellion (which continues today). Rock and roll gets its name from slang for having sex.
  2. Calvin Johansson – “The reason the music has largely gone unchallenged is the subjective notion that the notes, harmony, and rhythm of such songs contain no worldview, moral ethos, or life outlook. It is felt that music does not reflect a moral, philosophical, or theological position. Hence, the church has naively and simplistically split asunder the medium (music) and the message (text). Some Christians have embraced the music of rock (or a derived version of it) while disavowing the texts! In fact, such a split is not feasible. Christian rock of whatever category is still rock since the message remains the same, now having moved from bars, dance halls, and clubs to the chancel. We have not only given nihilistic rockers a forum to peddle their wares, but we do it for them!”  
(*Discipling Music Ministry* Peabody: Hendrickson, P. 24)
  3. Johansson continues: “The music of rock supports the repudiation of biblical standards by using combinations of sounds which are violent, mind-numbing, vulgar, raw, mesmerizing, rebellious, grossly repetitive, uncreative, undisciplined, and chaotic sounding. If listeners do not hear these things , it is because rock has dulled their aesthetic sensibilities.”  
(*Discipling Music Ministry* Peabody: Hendrickson, P. 26)
  4. Music is far more than just an arrangement of notes. Music can have a powerful effect upon the flesh. It can even increase the heart rate. Composers who write scores for movies know this better than any. A scene can evoke an entirely different response after musical score is added.
- C. Any reasonable person must admit that rock music is not suitable for ushering people into the presence of God.
1. Dan Lucarini – “Decades of rock music in our culture have permanently stamped that music style with the dimension of immorality. Changing the lyrics and substituting Christian musicians cannot remove that stigma.”  
(*Why I left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*, Page 91)

2. Dan Lucarini adds – “When someone says, ‘Show me where the Bible says that rock music is evil’, you could reply: ‘Show me where the Bible says that . . .’,
  - ‘. . . God is pleased you chose the same music style as Madonna, Hootie and the Blowfish, and the Dave Matthews Band.’
  - ‘. . . you should vigorously defend the favourite music style of this world.’
  - ‘. . . its OK to use the same music style as the sex and drug culture.’
  - ‘. . . God waived that “abstain from all appearance of evil” clause just for you.’”

(*Why I left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*, Page 96)
3. Knowing the roots and message of rock music one might wonder why Christians would want to bring music that finds its roots in rock into the worship of God. The church is always called to be different, to cut against the grain of culture. Christians throughout history haven’t faced severe persecution for conforming to their culture.

## VI. Some basic errors in the Contemporary Christian Music Movement.

- A. Emotionalism
  1. That the music we sing in worship should make us feel good
  2. This inevitably leads to a man-centered approach to worship
- B. Aesthetic Relativism
  1. All music is basically the same and equally acceptable to God (Rick Warren)
  2. This is the result of a culture where all standards have been erased.
  3. The truth is there *are* standards of excellence that transcend personal tastes and cultural trends.
- C. Pragmatism
  1. If it is acceptable to the masses and brings favorable results it must be pleasing to God – the end justifies the means.
  2. Again, this philosophy is the result of a relativistic society that has disavowed absolutes. God has established absolutes, laws, principles, and truths which must be obeyed. The Bible must regulate our methods.
- D. Idolatry
  1. If our personal preferences and desires become the greatest factor in determining our decisions we are guilty of idolatry.
  2. Worship should be the emptying of self before God who is all in all. Contemporary trends are moving towards satisfying the desires of the worshipper as the chief factor in worship.
  3. Calvin Johansson – “Worship which uses music for pleasuring the assembly (music programmed on the basis of likeability) results in making worshippers more immature because self-satisfaction becomes its purpose. Worship which ought to mature us in Christ then becomes a means of reinforcing our already ample self-centeredness. The centuries-long trend toward the enthronement of self has done much to invalidate our worship. We must address this problem if a sound biblical theism is to flourish in the twenty-first century. We cannot set ourselves up as gods and expect to worship Yahweh. Death to self (even in the musical realm) is necessary.”

(*Discipling Music Ministry* Peabody: Hendrickson, P. 57-58)