

5 Worship in Music

Where did music begin? No one race or group of people can lay claim to the origin of music, for all people have it in one form or another. Even the most primitive cultures have drums or musical instruments to help them express their emotions in songs and chants.

The Bible gives the earliest record of music. Job 38:7 tells that when the world was being formed the “stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy.” Music began in heaven before the creation of the earth as we know it.

Music is important, for it influences the way we feel, think, and behave. If used wrongly, music can be a strong force for evil. Used correctly, music can bring peace, harmony, and intimacy with God. The highest purpose of music is to worship and glorify the Lord. The Bible gives examples of worship through both instrumental and vocal music to help us in our ministry of thanksgiving and praise to God.

The Plan

- A. Ministering With Song
- B. Ministering With Instruments
- C. Blessed Through Music

The Goals

1. Identify which forms of music are biblical expressions of worship.
2. State principles relating to the use of instruments in worship.
3. List blessings of worshipful music.

A. MINISTERING WITH SONG

Goal 1. Identify which forms of music are biblical expressions of worship.

The Bible commands us: “Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:16–17). Ephesians 5:19 agrees with the passage above. *Songs* and *singing* are mentioned hundreds of times in Scripture. Clearly, God wants us to praise Him in song because He is worthy of our praise.

Some of our Christian songs are taken from the Psalms, literally Scripture set to music. The idea is not new, for the book of Psalms was the hymn book of the Jewish nation. They had special psalms for feast days (Psalm 81), psalms asking for forgiveness (Psalm 51), and many others. The greater number, however, were songs of praise and thanksgiving.

The New Testament encourages us to sing these psalms and other hymns and sacred songs. Christian songs of today are as varied as the old psalms—songs for special occasions such as funerals and weddings, songs of prayer and supplication, songs

of praise and worship. Each type of song serves a purpose. A song that says, “Just as I am, I come,” encourages sinners to come to the Lord just as they are, so it is often used for altar calls. A song that says, “Search me, O God,” helps believers open themselves to the searching of the Holy Spirit when they want to give every area of their lives to the Lord.

Many worship songs begin with another theme such as consecration. We tell the Lord that we will obey Him no matter what it costs. Then the songs remind us of why we are willing to obey Him. Afterwards, we become caught up in spontaneous worship as we sing to the Lord.

Too often Christians have missed this avenue of praise because they felt that their voices lacked quality. But songs of worship are not just for special occasions or for recordings for other people to listen to at home. They are songs of praise between us and God—our love songs to Him. Although other people may hear and enjoy them, their appreciation is only secondary. We sing first to and for the Lord.

How do we know a song of worship when we hear it? The song of worship does not talk about us or our own needs, nor does it invite the sinner to come to Christ. It extols God, magnifies Jesus, talks of the greatness and goodness of the Lord. It is the kind of song that takes us out of our surroundings and into the heavenly places with Christ. It may be only a simple chorus, one we sing from memory, but it glorifies the Father.

I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself. (Psalm 89:1–2)

Application

- 1** Which of the following completions is correct? A worship song differs from other types of songs because a worship song
- a)** is always quiet and solemn.
 - b)** reminds us of our faults.
 - c)** glorifies only God.
 - d)** invites sinners to Christ.
- 2** The psalms are Jewish songs
- a)** of praise.
 - b)** that cover various themes.
 - c)** too old to have meaning.
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B. MINISTERING WITH INSTRUMENTS

Goal 2. State principles relating to the use of instruments in worship.

Worshipping the Lord with musical instruments is mentioned often in the Old Testament. Many different kinds of instruments were used—wind instruments such as the trumpet and flute, stringed instruments like the harp and lyre, and percussion instruments like the drum and cymbal. Like the worshippers of the Old Testament, we can praise the Lord with anything that we have. One person may play an electric organ or conduct an orchestra. Another beats on a hollow log or shakes a tambourine. But all play to God’s glory.

As we studied in the last lesson, attitude is most important in worship. If I am to play an instrument, I must do my best because God deserves my best. But this does not mean I must wait until I have mastered the skill before I play. I must do the best that I can now, while still working towards mastery.

Simultaneously, worshippers must be careful not to use music to show off their talent. Pride is sin. Whatever abilities we have came from God, so we must use these in love and

humility. Otherwise our music would be no more than empty noise. (See 1 Corinthians 13.)

Music comes in many varieties. Some music is loud and lively, and others soft and quiet. Each has its proper place in Christian worship. Therefore, worshippers must be careful to consider the tastes of others. Consideration and respect for one another (Romans 12:10) apply in music as well.

If God has blessed you with musical ability, ask Him to help you use it to spread the gospel and to encourage others in heartfelt worship. As you pray He can direct you to the appropriate songs or choruses to be played. These should be carefully practiced and thought out before the presentation. The Lord will anoint your music and give inspiration and direction to every choice involved.

You can also use your instrument in private devotion. You will find joy in offering music to God, making up your own music and words or repeating favorite pieces that bring to mind the beauty and majesty of our God. Music is one of God's greatest gifts. We can reciprocate by offering it as one of our greatest gifts to God.

Application

3 Read the Scripture references on the left. In front of each reference write the number of the worship with music it matches.

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|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ... a Exodus 15:19–20 | 1) at the rebuilding of the temple |
| ... b 1 Chronicles 15:28 | 2) when the covenant box was moved |
| ... c Ezra 3:10 | 3) because of victory over the enemy |
| ... d Revelation 14:2 | 4) in heaven |

4 If music is one of God's gifts to us, then we have a right to

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- 5** Which principles or guidelines concerning music in worship are true?
- a)** We should only use musical instruments named in the Bible.
 - b)** We can play any instrument if we play it to the glory of God.
 - c)** Even in music we should show respect for other people and their feelings.
 - d)** Musical instruments may be played in private devotion.
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C. BLESSED THROUGH MUSIC

Goal 3. List blessings of worshipful music.

Second Chronicles 20 gives an unusual account of a battle that was won by worshipping the Lord in music and song. It happened after three ungodly nations had formed an alliance, so their combined armies could march against the little kingdom of Judah. With their overwhelming numbers, the outcome of the war seemed certain.

When God’s people heard about it, they cried out to Him for help. Instead of guiding them in military strategy, however, God told them to send musicians who would march before their army singing, “Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever” (v. 21). As they sang, the Lord threw the invaders into panic. The enemies turned on one another, fighting and killing. Then God’s people moved in to gather the loot and marched back to the city playing on harps and trumpets, giving glory to the Lord who gave them victory.

We may not be facing actual battle at this moment, but Ephesians 6 reminds us that our enemies today are not flesh and blood—but the devil and his powers. Just as the physical enemy was conquered through song hundreds of years ago, the spiritual enemy can be put to flight today. If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in

all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:31, 35, 37)

Paul and Silas, thrown into prison for the gospel's sake (Acts 16), rejoiced in the Lord. Though they had been severely beaten and their feet put in stocks, they prayed and sang praises to God. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake and their chains were loosed. God had set them free!

Then something else happened. The frightened jailer was about to kill himself when Paul stopped him by assuring him that they had not escaped. The jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (v. 30). This was the opportunity Paul and Silas wanted. They told the man that salvation would come to him and to his house by believing on Jesus Christ. He and his family believed and were baptized at once. Paul and Silas could then rejoice in a double victory.

Even today people are being brought to Christ through music. A South American guerilla fighter repented after entering a little church where he had heard singing. Others have been attracted to gospel meetings by music. In some instances the music itself was not outstanding, but because it was dedicated to the Lord, the Holy Spirit used it to draw people to himself.

You can relate to their experiences even though your experience may not be identical to theirs. Through a song the Lord helps you forget about your own problems and reach out to help others. Through a song you are assured that the Lord is close by, ready to help you take the next step. Through a song you have new hope and courage and realize how great God really is. Second Chronicles 5:14 tells of an occasion in the temple when the priests sang and the presence of the Lord came down so mightily that they could not continue the service. They waited in awed silence before His majesty.

When you are feeling sad or lonely, sing a worship chorus. When you are fearful, sing to the Lord! You will be surprised how quickly He will fill your heart with joy. Perhaps you can

ask someone to sing with you. Singing unites us in joy and love—and there is strength in unity.

Even more important than the benefits we receive is the privilege of ministering to the Lord himself. We praise Him not only for what praise does for us—but because He is worthy of our praise. We enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise because He is good and His love is eternal (Psalm 100).

God is worthy of this worship now and throughout all eternity. Let us joyfully bless the Lord! As we bless Him, He will bless us. I can just imagine the joy God feels as His creation blesses Him through song. In fact, He sings a song too! “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17). Hallelujah!

Application

- 6** Who sang when they were in trouble?
- a)** The army of Judah
 - b)** David
 - c)** Silas
 - d)** Many present-day believers
- 7** Which of the following statements are true?
- a)** Our worship in song may help others to worship the Lord too.
 - b)** People were brought to Christ through song in Bible times, but it will not happen today.
 - c)** God told the people of Judah not to praise Him until after they saw the victory.
 - d)** Our worship in music can be either songs we practiced or those we sing spontaneously.
- 8** In Psalm 104:33 the psalmist said he would sing to the Lord
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9 List at least three blessings we can receive when we worship the Lord in song. We have given one as an example.

a) *Unity with other believers*

b)

c)

d)



Check Your Answers

- 1 **c)** glorifies only God.
- 5 **b), c), and d)** are true.
- 2 **b)** that cover various themes.
- 6 You should mark all the choices because they all sang when they were in trouble.
- 7 **a)** and **d)** are true.
- 3 **a** 3) because of victory over the enemy.
b 2) when the covenant box was moved.
c 1) at the rebuilding of the temple.
d 4) in heaven.
- 8 all his life.
- 4 offer it back to God.
- 9 Your answer. You may list fears driven away, receiving help and strength, being filled with joy, or people being drawn to Christ.