

## THE TRUTH ABOUT SINGING

In this tract I will show you what the Bible says about singing in our worship service and in our private lives. Then I will show you why the church of Christ doesn't use musical instruments in their worship to God.

First, we need to find out what the source of our authority is for worshipping God. If we cannot agree on where our authority comes from, then we will never come to the same understanding of how we are to worship God. To help us discover what our authority is, I want you to notice what Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection from the dead.

**Matthew 28:18** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Since all authority was given to Jesus, this means that we must go to Him and His Word for our authority. Paul also confirms this.

**Colossians 3:17** And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

This clearly shows that Jesus is our authority, and we need to pay close attention to what He teaches us about worshipping God. When Jesus was in Samaria, He talked to a woman by Jacob's well. She wanted to know where we are supposed to worship God. He answered her question and then told her what true worship is.

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

If we agree that Jesus and the Word of God is our sole authority, then we must agree that these two elements are necessary to please God. First, we must worship God in spirit, which means from the heart. Second, we must worship God in truth, which means we are to worship God according to His Word because it is truth.

**John 17:17** "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

This is why we find many verses that command us to follow God's Word and nothing else. This means that creed books, bylaws or any other man-made doctrines should be rejected as being our authority.

**1 Corinthians 4:6** Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

**2 John 1:9** Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

It doesn't get any clearer than this. The Word of God is our sole authority that we must live by to be pleasing to God. It is also important to understand that our authority comes from the New Testament only. When Jesus died for us on the cruel cross, He brought a new covenant into place making the old covenant obsolete and no longer binding on the Christian today. Colossians 2:14 teaches us that when Jesus died on the cross, He nailed the requirements of Moses' Law to the cross, which means He put it to death. The book of Hebrews and Galatians are good books to study that show how we are no longer under the old covenant because we are under the new covenant.

**Hebrews 8:13** In that He says, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Based on what I have presented so far, we can see that our worship is to be regulated only by the Word of God that is found in the New Testament. The reason this is important to understand is because some try to bring things over from the Old Testament and make them a part of our New Testament worship to God. However, you cannot do this because those laws and requirements are dead to us today (Rom. 7). Think about this. If it is acceptable to bring one thing over from that obsolete covenant, then logically you should be able to bring over everything else including animal sacrifices.

Now that I have established that our authority comes from the New Testament, we can now see how singing is a part of our worship to God. In 1 Cor. 14, Paul teaches the Corinthians how to conduct a worship service in an orderly manner. In that chapter, you learn that singing was a part of their worship to God, which shows us that singing is a part of our worship to God.

Now let's take a look at some passages about singing and how it is to be done.

**Ephesians 5:18** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

**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.

From these verses, we learn there are two different purposes for singing in our worship to God. The first purpose is singing praises to God from our hearts. This purpose can also be seen in the following verses.

**Hebrews 2:12** .. "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

**Hebrews 13:15** Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

This last verse would certainly include singing to God.

**James 5:13** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

Surely, we can all agree that when we come together to worship God it is a cheerful time. So, we should sing praises to God as James suggested. We also have an example in which singing is directed toward God outside the public worship as well.

**Acts 16:25** But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

So whether we are in public worship or somewhere else, we can sing praises to God through song.

The second purpose we learn from Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 is that when we sing, we are teaching and admonishing one another. I like to refer to this as congregational teaching. The word "admonishing" means to warn. This is why it's important the song leader chooses songs that edify. When we sing about God's amazing grace or about how the judgment day is coming, these songs are how we teach and admonish one another about God's Word. With this in mind, we should agree that the songs we sing need to be Biblical, and should not contain false doctrine. You wouldn't want a

preacher to stand up and teach something false. In the same manner, we don't want to be guilty of teaching something false when we are singing. Sometimes it is easy for us to overlook the message a song is teaching because we can sing it well, and we like the way it sounds. However, consider what Paul taught the Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 14:15** What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Paul is teaching us that we need to understand what we are teaching when we are singing. We need to ask ourselves, would I teach what this song is teaching to someone else? Now let me tell you what I am not saying. I am not saying that we should go over every song we sing with a microscope and nitpick it to death. Instead, we need to examine the overall message of the song. I have a great example of this. In the song "Night with Ebon Pinion" the overall message is about what Jesus went through as He prayed in the garden alone. However, I want you to notice what the first line of this song says.

**"Night with Ebon pinion, Brooded ore the vale"**

I am certain that there aren't many people who know what this means. Who or what is Ebon pinion, and what does this expression "Brooded or the vale" mean? Even though a person may not fully understand every word of this song, it would be acceptable to sing it because we understand its overall message. So, all I am saying is we need to be careful at what we sing, but don't throw a song out just because you may not fully understand a small part of it. However, if a song is teaching something false, like you are saved by faith alone, we should not sing it no matter how good it sounds.

Another thing we need to realize with this idea of singing with understanding is how important it is to concentrate on what we are singing, and remembering that our singing is to come from our hearts. So, we should sing with emotion knowing that the words we are singing are praising our God. We also need to be careful about singing the same songs over and over again because we can get to the point to where we are just mouthing the words instead of putting our hearts into them. This is one reason I think it's great when the song leaders teach us new songs so we have new words and new thoughts to think about as we sing.

# The Truth About Singing

Another important point from Eph.5:19 and Col. 3:16 is that singing is a command. Singing to God is not an option, and so each of us is to sing if we are capable. I understand sometimes we have sicknesses and those who cannot speak, but even in these instances, we can concentrate on what is being sung. These two verses also answer the question, who should sing? We can see this with clarity from the Greek because in both of these verses nearly every word is in the plural form, which means that every single person is to sing. God doesn't care if you can't carry a tune; He just wants your singing to come from your heart. So, if there is nothing preventing you from singing, you need to follow this command and sing to God with everyone. Since these verses command everyone to sing, they rule out solos and choirs in the worship service.

So in our public worship, let us all sing with understanding from our hearts as we sing praises to God, and we teach and admonish one another. Now that I have established our authority for singing and what the Bible teaches about singing. Let's examine the following question.

## **Why does the church of Christ not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship to God?**

This is one area that most of the religious world cannot understand because they will ask over and over again, "Why in the world would you not want to have musical instruments in your worship to God?" The next time someone asks you a question like this, ask them, "why do you use them"? Most of them don't know why they use them. They just know they like them or they might say, "Oh, it just adds so much to the worship service." First, I want you to think about this typical answer and ask yourself the question, why are they coming to worship? Are they coming to please God and worship Him or are they coming to focus in on themselves and how they feel or what they get out of it? One of the main problems in the religious world today is that people focus in on their own desires instead of God's desires. They don't come to worship God, they come to please themselves. That is exactly why people are using musical instruments in their worship to God because you cannot find one scripture in the New Testament that authorizes their use by a direct command or by example.

So, the next time someone asks you this question, ask them to show you just one scripture in the New Testament that authorizes us to use a musical instrument in our worship to God. I promise you, they will not be

able to find one. Another problem with the religious world today is that they blindly follow what they grew up around. As long as they have lived, their denomination has used musical instruments and to them it seems natural to use them. So, they have never questioned it. I sincerely believe if they would take an honest look at the scriptures, they would soon realize that musical instruments are an addition to God's Word, which makes it a sin to use them in worship. The New Testament is proof enough to show that it only authorizes us to sing to Lord. However, I want to share some external evidence that also shows that they should not be used in our worship to God. Let's begin by looking at the history of the instrument and when it began to be used.

Countless scholars and historians agree that musical instruments were not used in the early church. In fact, the earliest mentioning of their introduction didn't come until the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century. In the Catholic Church, Pope Vitalian sanctioned their use for the first time in A.D. 670. This caused controversy because notice what the Catholic Encyclopedia says about this.

**"...The first Christians were of too spiritual fiber to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice".**

**"The rejection of all musical instruments from Christian worship is consistent among the fathers" (New Catholic Encyclopedia 10:106)**

The idea of using musical instruments didn't catch on fast at all. It always caused great controversy and division wherever it was introduced. It wasn't until 1851 and beyond that people started embracing the use of musical instruments in their worship to God. I want to share with you several quotes from denominational preachers from the past.

**John Calvin founder of the Presbyterian Church: "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps or the restoration of the other shadows of the law."**(Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol, I, p. 539)

**John Wesley founder of the Methodist Church: "I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen,"**

**Adam Clark famous Methodist commentator: "Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor."**

**Martin Luther founder of the Lutheran Church: "Martin Luther called the organ and 'ensign of Baal'." McClintock & Strong's Encyclopedia.**

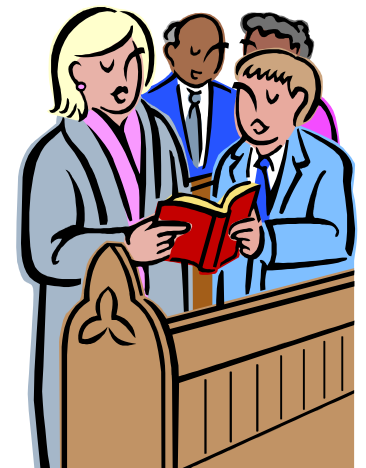
**Charles H. Spurgeon a well-known Baptist preacher: "I would as soon attempt to pray to God with machinery as to sing to him with machinery."**

**J.H. Garrison of the Christian Church: "There is no command in the NT, Greek or English commanding the use of the instrument.**

At one time, all these different denominations represented here understood the use of musical instruments were not to be used in our worship to God. Yet sadly, every single one of these denominations use musical instruments in their worship services today. This is a movement that has begun to affect the church of Christ as well. We have seen Max Lucado and his congregation turn their backs on the Word of God and embrace the use of musical instruments in their worship services and it's not just them. Recently, the Richland Hills church of Christ in Dallas has started a worship service on Saturday in which they use musical instruments and partake of the Lord's Supper on that day. This shows us that the Lord's church is starting to follow the same pattern as the denominations. If we don't stand up for the truth and uphold God's way, it's going to be difficult to find a congregation in the future that is not using musical instruments.

In conclusion, I have shown you that our sole authority comes from the New Testament and we must worship God in spirit and in truth. The New Testament teaches us that we are to sing and it names the instrument as our heart. We have seen that history confirms that we are not authorized to use musical instruments in our worship to God. Now it is up to you to decide whom you will serve, God or humans.

**If you have comments or questions e-mail me at [lgchurchofchrist@cablone.net](mailto:lgchurchofchrist@cablone.net).**



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