

How Should We Choose Worship Music?

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We understand that our goal in worship is to please the LORD (Rev. 4:11). The Bible does not directly define a style of worship music that is most pleasing to the LORD. That said, if our genuine desire is to please the LORD in our worship, it behooves us to search the scriptures for guidance in our approach to every aspects of worship – including the selection of worship music.

Why do we sing in worship services? Because the Lord instructs us to sing to Him!

- **(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”
- Above, we see that the purpose of worship music is to:
 - “to teach and admonish”
 - “to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord”

What else may I understand from Scripture?

1. Worship music should teach sound doctrine and reflect grace in our hearts

- **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.”

▪ Implications:

- Our music should promote unity around sound doctrine rather than stylistic preferences;
- We should not use music that either teaches error or is likely to cause confusion about doctrine;
- We should avoid music that is more likely to encourage emotion than sound doctrine;
- We should avoid music that encourages prideful focus on self (grace is the *unmerited* favor of God!).

2. Worship music should encourage a reverent heart before the presence of God

- **Revelation 4:10-11** “The four and twenty elders **fall down before** him that sat on the throne, **and worship him** that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne ...”

- **Matthew 18:20** “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
- **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: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.”
 - **Implications:** Our music should promote a spirit of humility before our holy God *rather than a desire to be entertained.*

3. Worship music should encourage worship *in spirit and truth*

- **John 4:23-24** “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. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”
 - **Implications:**
 - We should avoid music that emphasize or encourages an emotional response over genuine worship. God gave us emotions. And a strong emotional response may be from God – but certain styles of music have more potential to counterfeit genuine worship with empty emotion;
 - Arguably, music that emphasizes a sensual beat tends to encourage a response that is more sensual than spiritual. As such, we should avoid the sensual beats that are typically present in rock, pop and similar styles.

4. Worship music should be consistent with our call to holiness / separation

- **1 Peter 1:14-16** “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, **Be ye holy; for I am holy.**” (Compare Lev. 19:2)
- **1 Peter 2:9-11** “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 ¶ Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”
- **2 Corinthians 6:17-18** “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you..”

- Implications:
 - Our music should be different than the world’s music. Visitors to our church should hear a distinct difference between our music and the music of the world.
 - This excludes all styles that are typically associated with sinful themes, i.e. rock, pop, hip-hop, country-western
 - Our music should reflect a commitment to *ecclesiological separation*, i.e. separation from unbiblical “Christian movements” (e.g. Pentecostalism, Charismatic Movement)
 - A large portion of contemporary worship music has originated in Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. While we care deeply for believers in those churches, we are called to separate from their doctrinal errors.
 - “Majesty” teaches the Pentecostal “kingdom-now” theology;
 - “Shout to the Lord” was written by Darlene Zschech, a Pentecostal worship leader.

5. Worship music should promote the Lord’s desire for decency and orderliness

- **1 Corinthians 14:40** Let all things be done decently and in order
 - **Implication:** Avoid musical styles that tend to promote disorder

6. Worship music should avoid placing a stumblingblock before the brethren

- **Romans 14:13-14** ¹³ ¶ Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

In summary, our worship music should ...

- ... teach sound doctrine and reflect grace in our hearts (Col 3:16);
- ... encourage a reverent heart before the special presence of God (Mat. 18:20);
- ... encourage worship *in spirit and truth* vs. counterfeit emotionalism (John 4:24);
- ... be consistent with our call to holiness / separation from worldliness (2 Cor. 6:17);
- ...promote an atmosphere of decency and orderliness (1 Cor 14:40);
- ...avoid placing a stumblingblock before the brethren (Rom 14:13).