

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MUSIC AND WORSHIP

1. Does the Bible have anything to say about music?

- Yes. Over six hundred biblical passages speak to the issue of music.

2. Is music permissible for use in worship?

- Yes. In fact, we are commanded to use music in worship numerous times in Scripture ([Deuteronomy 31:19,22](#); [Psalm 96:1,3,13](#); [Psalm 100:2](#); Psalm 150; [Ephesians 5:19](#)).

3. What are some ways that music was used in the Bible?

- The following is a list of biblical passages that speak about the various uses of music: [Genesis 31:27-28](#); [Numbers 10:2-6](#); [Deuteronomy 31:19-22](#); [Judges 7:19-2](#); [Judges 11:32-34](#); [1 Samuel 16:23](#); [2 Samuel 19:33-35](#); [1 Kings 1:39-40](#); [2 Kings 3:11, 14-16](#); [2 Chronicles 20:27-28](#); [2 Chronicles 35:23-25](#); [Ezra 3:10-11](#); [Nehemiah 12:27](#); [Job 30:9-10](#); [Isaiah 5:12](#); [16:10](#); [Matthew 9:18, 23-24](#); [Matthew 11:16-17](#); [Luke 15:25](#).

4. When was music first instituted for use in worship?

- [Job 38:7](#) indicates that the angels in heaven sang to God at the time of the creation.

5. Is music moral or amoral?

- Though Scripture does not speak in terms that would allow us to judge each piece of music as being clearly appropriate or clearly sinful, the fact that hundreds of verses in the Word of God speak to the issue of music causes us to conclude that music is clearly moral.

6. What is the purpose of worship?

- The purpose of worship is to attribute worth to God ([Psalm 27:6](#)), to praise God ([Psalm 150:3-4](#)), to lift the emotions of the heart ([Ephesians 5:18-19](#)), to learn Scripture and spiritual truths by singing ([Psalm 32:7-8](#)), to introduce others to Jesus Christ ([Psalm 40:3](#)), to instruct and convict through the proclamation and singing of scriptural texts ([Isaiah 55:11](#); [1 Corinthians 10:31](#); [Ephesians 5:15-21](#)), and to encourage obedience ([James 1:25](#)).

7. Why is there so much controversy over the use of music in the church?

- Because Scripture does not speak explicitly on the issue of musical styles, people tend to elevate their tastes and preferences to the standard of Scripture, causing disagreement over those styles that are appropriate for use in worship.

8. How long has music been a controversial subject in the church?

- While it is impossible to identify when the controversy began, we know of church music disputes occurring as early as the thirteenth century when the organ was first introduced in the Catholic mass.

9. What are some examples of music that were once considered inappropriate for use in worship?

- Some examples of music once considered inappropriate for use in worship include Handel's "Messiah," "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," "Joy to the World," "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "At the Cross," "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?" and "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?"

10. How should I respond to the controversy over music?

- The controversy should motivate you to know what the authoritative Scriptures teach about music so that we can think and act biblically in relation to the subject.

11. What standard will be used to determine our church's worship music?

- God's Word will be used as the standard by which our church's music will be selected and ministered.

12. Who is responsible for setting the direction of our church's music?

- A church's senior pastor bears ultimate responsibility for leading the church family according to the Word of God ([Acts 14:23](#), [15:2](#); [1 Timothy 5:17](#); [1 Peter 5:2](#)). This includes oversight of his church's worship practices.

13. Who bears responsibility for the music selected for worship?

- Though the music leader will have a great deal of input regarding music selected for use in corporate worship, a church's senior pastor oversees the selection of music used in worship services.

14. What should drive the selection of worship music?

- According to [Colossians 3:12-17](#), music selected for use in worship should focus on God's character, express thankfulness to Him, exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, and teach the principles of Scripture for the purpose of encouraging and training in God's truth.

15. Does Scripture provide regulations for those leading music in worship?

- [1 Chronicles 6:31-47](#) teaches that those responsible for leading music should be prepared to conduct the music in an organized and orderly fashion.

16. Does the Bible identify musical instruments that are appropriate for use in worship?

- Yes. The Bible identifies three families of instruments as being appropriate for use in worship: strings ([Genesis 31:27](#); [1 Samuel 10:25](#); [Psalm 33:2](#); etc.), wind ([Joshua 6:5](#); [1 Samuel 10:1-6](#); [2 Chronicles 7:6](#); etc.), and percussion ([Exodus 15:20](#); [Judges 11:34](#); [1 Chronicles 15:19](#); etc.).

17. Are any musical instruments intrinsically evil?

- No. The Bible does not identify any musical instruments as being sinful. In fact, Scripture encourages the use of a broad array of instruments in worship ([Genesis 31:27](#); [Joshua 6:5](#); [Exodus 15:20](#); etc.).

18. What are some examples of instruments that were once considered inappropriate for use in worship?

- Many of the instruments commonly used in churches today such as pianos, pipe organs, electronic organs, flutes, etc., were once widely considered worldly and heretical.

19. Why don't we read of instruments being used in the New Testament church?

- Because the New Testament focus on worship emphasizes the idea of worship being a way of life, specific instructions on corporate worship practices were minimal.

20. Does the Bible address appropriate and inappropriate styles of music?

- Yes. Though the Bible does not mention the particular style of music used, it associates positive uses of music with the praise of God ([Exodus Job 38:7](#)), the worship of Christ ([Revelations 5:9](#)), times of celebration ([Luke 15:25,32](#)), etc. It also associates negative uses of music with murder ([Genesis 4:21](#)), idolatry ([Exodus 32:15ff](#), [Daniel 3:5,7,10,15](#)), drunken feasts ([Isaiah 5:11-12](#)), etc.

21. If the Bible doesn't specifically address a particular musical style, how should that style be viewed?

- If the Bible does not specifically address a particular musical style, the style should be viewed positively unless its use promotes thinking or behavior that Scripture identifies as displeasing to God.

22. Are there any particular rhythms that are sinful in nature?

- Though Scripture does not clearly identify rhythms that particularly please or displease the Lord, it points to several examples when music's building blocks were used inappropriately. From these examples, we see that rhythms themselves are not immoral, but they can become so when used as a means of expressing the sinful motives of men's hearts.

23. Does God give us instructions for arrangements of music that displease Him?

- Yes. Though God's instructions do not specifically detail what notes and rhythms to use, God provides general principles to guide us in selecting and arranging music that pleases Him.

24. What is the difference between hymns and choruses?

- In general, hymns are older songs that express deep theological truths about God. Choruses are often newer songs that express ideas concerning the Christian's relationship to God. Sometimes choruses become so well loved that they become part of the church's musical tradition. Examples of this include "Thank You, Lord," "God So Loved the World," and "I Love You, Lord."

25. Should our church be using newly written music in worship?

- Yes. [Psalm 40:3](#) and [96:1](#) speak of new songs as being the result of a fresh spiritual work. Milo Thompson explains, "New songs say, 'God is doing something here and now, not just a hundred years ago.'"

26. Are songs with repetitive lyrics appropriate for use in worship?

- Though we must be cautious of allowing repetition to become mindless and devoid of meaning, the seraphim who surround the throne of God serve as an example of acceptable worship that is repetitive. "Day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come'" ([Revelation 4:8](#)). We also see repetition used as a poetic device throughout the psalms ([Psalm 129:1-2](#); [Psalm 136:1-26](#)).

27. Is music that appeals to my emotions sinful?

- Not necessarily. The Scriptures often speak of worship that involves the emotional aspect of man ([Psalm 95:1-2](#)). Music, therefore, that appeals to one's emotions can be a very helpful ingredient in biblical worship, provided that our emotions continue to be governed by a biblically controlled mind ([1 Corinthians 14:15](#)).

28. Is it wrong to clap or raise my hands during songs of worship?

- No. In fact, in [Psalm 47:1](#), [Psalm 98:7-9](#), and [Isaiah 55:12](#), the Lord Himself associates clapping with singing in a positive way. In [1 Timothy 2:8](#), Paul expresses the idea that the body is an important element in worship expression. The body is part of the total person engaged in worship. This is a principle we do not hesitate to recognize when in prayer we use the body to bow our heads, close our eyes, fold our hands, or kneel. Other passages that speak to this issue include [Psalm 28:2](#), [Psalm 63:4](#), [Psalm 134:2](#), [Psalm 141:2](#), and [Hebrews 12:12](#).

29. Is music that prompts physical expression inappropriate for worship?

- Because the Bible identifies certain physical expressions as being God-pleasing, music that facilitates such expressions may rightly be judged as pleasing to God.

30. Is it wrong if I don't express myself physically when worshipping?

- No. While it is legalistic to forbid legitimate physical expressions in worship, it is equally legalistic to mandate such expressions.

31. How do you define what music is unacceptable for use in worship?

- Music that is theologically errant, that facilitates immodest or lustfully seductive behavior, or that fails to keep as its primary focus the communication of praise and scriptural truths is unacceptable for use in worship ([Ephesians 5:15-21](#)). Music that does not contribute to the believer's love for God should be avoided.

32. Who is the audience for our worship?

- In his book *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, John Frame explains that our worship "is to be God-centered, but it is also to be both edifying and evangelistic. Worship that is unedifying or unevangelistic may not properly claim to be God-centered" (8).

33. Should worship music be used to minister to others?

- Yes. In [Ephesians 5:19](#), Paul encourages believers to use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as tools for ministering to one another.

34. Should worship music be used to reach the spiritually immature?

- The mature Christian will be willing to enslave his or her liberties in order to help disciple those for whom musical tastes and preferences may serve as a hindrance to spiritual growth ([1 Corinthians 9:20-22](#)).

35. Should worship music be used as a tool for outreach?

- In [1 Corinthians 14:25](#), Paul encourages believers to conduct their services in such a way that even an unbeliever might repent and worship God, declaring that “God is certainly among you!” This passage clearly indicates that worship music not only **can** be used as a tool for evangelism, it **should** be used as a tool for evangelism.

36. Should we stay away from melodies and accompaniment that sound like the kind of music played on secular radio stations?

- Simply because a song may sound similar to a secular melody, its use is not automatically ruled out. As long as the melody and accompaniment of a given song lie within acceptable biblical parameters, the song can be rightly used to worship God.

37. If contemporary music is questionable, shouldn't we refrain from using it?

- Christians should be careful not to label certain ministry forms as “perpetually questionable,” and for such reasons to avoid their use. Once a contemporary worship song has been run through the evaluation of God's Word and judged appropriate, we must conclude that the use of such music is entirely acceptable.

38. If our church uses music with a contemporary flavor, aren't we catering to worldly standards?

- [1 John 2:16](#) explains that worldliness is not defined first and foremost by outward signifiers such as clothing styles or musical forms. Rather, worldliness is defined by the content of the heart—“the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.”

39. If we embrace contemporary worship music, aren't we headed down the “slippery slope” that will lead us to displease God in our worship?

- Based on Paul's argument in [1 Corinthians 9:20-22](#), the slippery slope must have two sides. At the base of one side lies a ministry ruined by a reckless disregard for God's principles of morality. At the base of the other side lies a ministry smothered by needless conservatism. The peak of the slope represents a balanced ministry that seeks to effectively minister to both groups without regard to personal preference.

40. What is the difference between compromising with the world and relating to the world in a way that pleases God?

- Relating to the world in a way that pleases God involves sharing the truth of Scripture in ways that are relevant and easily understood. Compromising with the world involves an alteration of foundational truths in order to achieve an unbiblical objective ([John 4:1-26](#), [Philippians 2:5-9](#)).

41. What should I do if I have concerns about the moral nature of the music our church is doing?

- Strive to approach the subject with humility and a learner's spirit ([1 Peter 5:5](#)), and after applying yourself to the study of the God's counsel, if you still have concerns, please communicate your concerns to your pastors in a biblical fashion.

42. What should I do if I don't like the music being selected for worship?

- If your dislike for the music selected is based on personal preference, you should heed the counsel of [Ephesians 5:20-21](#), which calls us to be "subject one to another." Your concern should not be centered on your preference, but rather for the impact of the selected music upon the church's ability to minister effectively to the congregation and the community at large.

43. How can I distinguish between issues of morality and personal preference?

- Issues of morality are addressed by the direct commands and indirect principles of God's Word. Issues of preference are addressed by Paul's discussion on Christian liberty in places like 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14.

44. What's the difference between convictions and preferences?

- A conviction is a principle corresponding to direct commands from the Word of God for which an individual would be willing to die. A preference is a position aligned with personal tastes or desires that may be an illegitimate personal application of an indirect principle of Scripture.

45. Why didn't God provide us with clear instructions on this issue?

- Because God did not provide specific guidelines to govern our use of music, we should conclude that God intends us to think and act with discernment, to learn from and rejoice in the diversity among our brothers and sisters in Christ, whose differing tastes and cultural backgrounds serve as evidence of the universality of gospel truths, and to long for the day when we will see Him face to face just as He is!

Question and Answers compliments of Steve Viars, Faith Baptist Church, Lafayette, IN