



What is Acceptable Music?

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.”
(Psalms 119:105)

There are a lot of opinions being aired about what is acceptable Christian music. Rather than frame our discussion by the use of human logic let us look at God’s Word—for it is the Word of God that will light our path, and the Bible declares that only a fool delights in airing his own opinion (Proverbs 18:2).

We accept unholy music because we measure music by what we like—what feels good to us. Our flesh likes what we hear and therefore labels it holy. So often in a discussion of what is acceptable music, arguments are the only result. This happens because each individual’s flesh is attracted to different

styles of music, and they are unwilling to surrender their tastes to the Lord. We must return to the cross, being crucified to what our flesh likes and dislikes, and discover the desires of Christ. This is what Paul means when he declares that he has been “crucified with Christ.” Dead men are dead to their likes and dislikes. Only as we become crucified to our ears, will we have the ears of Christ—ears that listen only to what the Father finds pleasing and pure. Jesus did not come to please Himself but to please God, and we must follow Jesus in those footsteps even in things like music. This is the kind of hatred for our own life that Jesus calls all His disciples to (John 12:25).

God created music so that we might joyfully fulfill the greatest commandment. God invented music so that the soul, spirit, and body of man would all come into unity to praise God. Nothing moves all of a man like music. This is why music is so powerful and personal. Men will argue with great emotion over music because all of a man is involved. Music is able to move men to tears and nations to war. In Exodus 32 the people of God built a golden calf in the name of the Lord. They became “corrupt” in their worship of God just as the worship leaders and musicians of our day have become corrupt (Exodus 32:7).

Worship has become the code word for entertainment in so many situations. Today the church tolerates and whitewashes all manner of ungodly music, performed in the name of Jesus—and, just as Aaron did, there are plenty of individuals to tack on the name of the Lord in order to justify fleshly desires.

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.” (Exodus 32:5)

However, we must test what is being done in the name of the Lord by Scripture. In this short space, here are just a few basic guidelines.

1. Music must leave as much room as possible for the soul to express itself.

Most artists write music to move the flesh and then the soul. Music should be written from a position of being on the cross - then it will not move the flesh to sin. This is why God tells us to first make music in our “heart” before using instruments.

We must first “speak” words of psalms, hymns and spirituals songs to “one another.” No lights, no loud music, no fine playing bands, eloquent voices, nothing but normal conversation. A godly service certainly has no worship leaders psyching the crowds up, or musicians giving the people whatever kind of entertainment or worship they want. In a godly church everyone first speaks Scriptures and other spiritual things to each other before ever singing. Their hearts fill up with the Word of God, by way of a crucified life, and the worship directs what bursts forth from their hearts. It is nothing less than crucified flesh being overcome by the joy of a pure heart. A far cry from what we see happening today.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19)

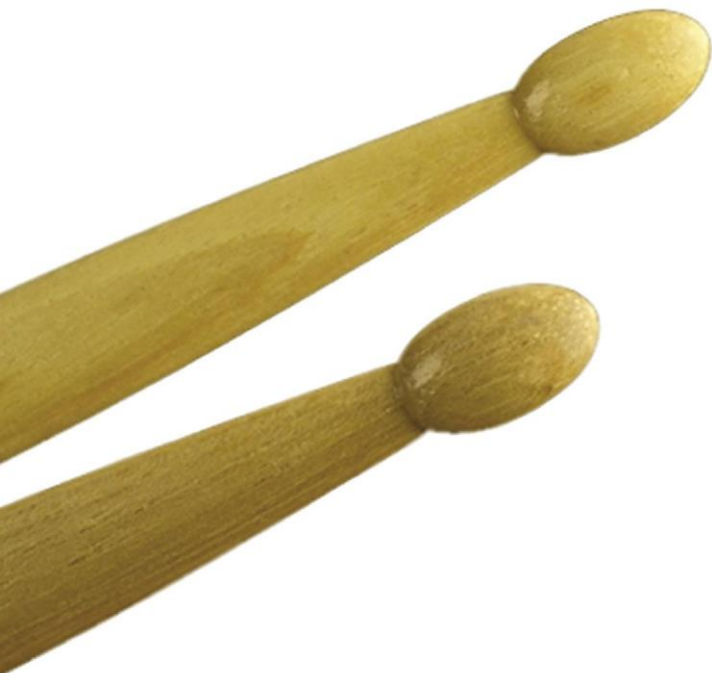
After we’re done speaking, the “heart” should be moved to “make music” to the Lord on its own. The responsibility of every music leader is to make certain that, however a musical instrument is used, it only brings out the music of the heart that flows first from speaking to one another in song. Any song or music that comes to man outwardly and then moves the heart is fleshly and wrong.

A Christian’s music should be alien and strange to the ungodly. In short, they shouldn’t like it. When individuals use music to draw the world they actually become enemies of God (James 4:4). While it is true that Jesus sat with sinners, it is not true that He sinned while sitting down. Whenever a musician seeks to “cross over” they lose the cross of Christ and all power of the gospel

2. The outward appearance must not look like the world.

It is a lie to say that God doesn’t care what is on the outside, that He only looks at the heart. God, who created your soul, used the same love to create your body. Dress, hair, manners, conversation, all that other men see should reflect the glory of God. Anything that draws attention to ourselves, whether body piercing, tattoos or hair length and styles, rebels against the Word of God and defies His glory. Not only is there no agreement between the temple of God and idols, but even a casual reading of Scripture clearly declares we are not to mark our bodies, dress in such a way as to draw attention to ourselves or have hair length that is contrary to God’s will.

Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. (2 Corinthians 6:17)



Everything a musician does should confirm the preceding Scripture; becoming “separate” and touching “no unclean thing.” If you don’t leave a concert and walk away saying to yourself, “That is different from the world,” then it is not of Jesus. Any concert in the name of Jesus should not have the smoke, lights, volume, and dress of the world. We are called to purify ourselves from outward things that “contaminate” the body and ways of playing music that defile the “spirit.” Indeed, if music is so loud that it harms the ears, it is a sin against the body God gave us (1 Corinthians 3:17).

3. All songs must reflect the glory of God.

Every song should speak of Jesus. In “word or deed” every song must speak clearly of Jesus and the glory of God. Whether in psalms, hymns or spiritual songs, if a person can’t understand that the song speaks of Jesus then it is unacceptable in God’s ears.

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. 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)

4. The musicians must not be preaching themselves.

Drop by the web site of Christian musicians, or look at their album covers, and you will see all manner of spiritual insanity. They seek the applause of man and point to themselves in all that they do. They sing in their own name and are accepted by so many because the audience likes the fact that they really sing about themselves. Listeners recognize

that the singer is merely using God to glorify themselves—and that appeals to their flesh. Jesus revealed this truth when He walked on earth.

I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. (John 5:43)

This is why Paul speaks of his ministry in these terms.

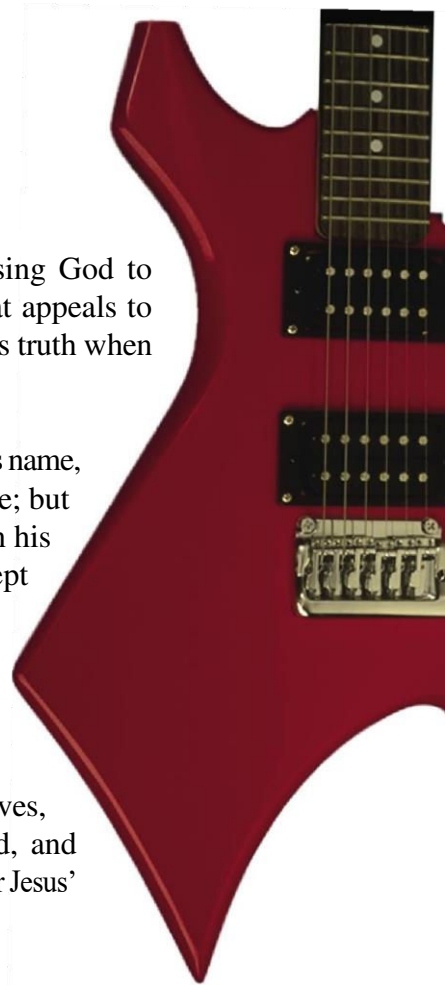
For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5)

All awards and approval of men must be utterly rejected. For music to be acceptable to God we must remove the Dove Awards. No more clapping between songs, no more discussion of how many like the music. The music and musicians must reflect the heart of Jesus that did “not accept praise from men.”

I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.” (John 5:41-42)

5. Music must never be used for evangelism.

God never ordained music to be used to as a tool for evangelism. Music was always meant for worship. Using music for evangelism is to sing songs to demons and wicked men, and to lure the most unholy and unrepentant into our temples. Think about it. What interest



does unrepentant man have in the words of worship in our song? Perhaps the only thing that draws them is the beat and style of music or the fact that the words have no depth.

When we create a style of music to draw the world, we become like the serpent in the Garden of Eden. In other words, only their flesh is drawn, just as man's flesh was lured to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If we use music to call the worldly to church, we might as well give away free beer. This is why Paul declares that we cannot eat at the table of demons and the table of the Lord at the same time (1 Corinthians 10:21). If true holiness flowed from our concerts, men would be convicted of sin or spurred onto more holiness. The beat would be lost to the sound of repentance and righteousness.

All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: “He is good; his love endures forever.” Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God. (2 Chronicles 5:12-14)

Conclusion

True righteousness and purity cannot be hidden, but that which falls short must be explained and justified with much debate. Men like to cloud the issue with words so that they don't have to obey God. Before we ever listen to a song, or pick up an instrument, let righteousness flow like a “never-failing stream.” Until then “away with the noise of your songs.”

Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:23-24)

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