



WORSHIP MATTERS

LESSON 6: THE MUSIC IN WORSHIP

Introduction

- Chances are you listen to music every day. In fact, the average American listens to five hours of music a day. Think about it. It's not just what we hear on the radio or our iPods. Most TV shows have a theme song and often have transition music. Commercials often make use of music. If you go shopping or even stand in an elevator, you might have music playing quietly in the background. Music is everywhere. Why?
- Martin Luther wrote, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music." Do you agree with Luther, that next to God's Word, the greatest gift God has given to mankind is music? Why does Luther think God gave mankind the gift of music?
- Agree or Disagree — Music is a gift God gave to animals too. For example, the birds can sing.

Worship Matters. And music is a major part of how we worship. Music affects our emotions, and thus can be helpful in readying us for worship. Studies have repeatedly shown that music makes it easier to remember texts. Churchgoers might not remember a single phrase from the Old Testament lesson; however, they may have the refrain from the Psalm of the Day stuck in their head all week. And if nothing else, singing and making music allows us to glorify God in a unique way.

In this lesson, we're going to look at how we choose the music for our worship. Hopefully, it will make us get more out of the musical aspects of our worship service.

Part 1: The Bible & music

God's Word has something to say about music. On the next page, you will find a number of passages that either speak about music directly or they could be applied to the concept of music & singing. Some of the passages are *prescriptive*, that is, they tell us "This is something which God wants done." Others of the passages are *descriptive*, that is, they tell us, "This is something that happened which God found it worthy to tell us about." Why is it important to distinguish between *prescriptive* and *descriptive* passages?

After you read the passages, in a group or individually, come up with some truths about worship or principles/guidelines for the music we use in worship. What has God clearly asked us to do? What might be some wise guidelines for us to follow?

1 Chronicles 6:31-32

These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the LORD after the ark came to rest there. They ministered with music before the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon built the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. They performed their duties according to the regulations laid down for them.

Psalm 4:1

For the director of music. With stringed instruments.

Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.

1 Samuel 16:23

Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Colossians 3:16

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.

Ephesians 5:19

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.

James 5:13

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

Psalm 150

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
praise him with tambourine and dancing,
praise him with the strings and flute,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Job 30:31

My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing.

Acts 16:24-25

Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

1 Corinthians 14:15

So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

Hebrews 2:12

[Jesus] says "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

1 Corinthians 13:1

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Some general principles for our worship music:

- We want texts which focus on _____. This doesn't mean we won't sing songs which talk about the believer's response. But when balancing songs about what God has done for us vs. what we will do for God, we want much of the former and little of the latter.
- We want a predominance of texts which focus on God's _____ work. This doesn't mean we won't sing songs about God's providence or power. But our main focus will be on his mercy and grace.
- Any text which _____ God's Word is not usable.
- Any texts which states truths in a _____ way is not usable.
- _____ in worship is good. God created all things.
- The powerful _____ impact of music must be considered, so that the vehicle (music) which carries the text is fitting.

When you boil it all down, it seems that when considering music in worship, we need to focus on two aspects:

1) _____ & 2) _____

The first is important because it is only through the Gospel that any spiritual benefit is derived. Soothing music can calm your emotions, but music, by itself, cannot create or strengthen faith.

The second is important, because it affects our psychology. Whether music is up-tempo or slow, minor key or major key, loud or soft... these all affect our frame of mind. If someone is in the wrong frame of mind, they are not ready to receive the Word.

- Of those two things, which is the "master" and which is the "servant" when it comes to the musical portion of our worship.

Part 2: The text of music

- Look again at Colossians 3:16. "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." What does that verse suggest about the content of the song texts we use in public worship?
- Re-read Psalm 150 on page 2 of this lesson. How theologically deep is that psalm?

- Compare Psalm 150, the last of the psalms, to the first psalm.

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.
 Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.

How theologically deep is this psalm?

- In your studies of the psalms, did you find them to be more similar to Psalm 1 or Psalm 150? What does this exercise in comparing psalms suggest about the content of worship song texts in general?
- Individually or in groups, go over the following song texts. Don't think about the tune. Focus *exclusively* on the words. Write down any thoughts or observations you have. Circle any key phrases. Could we use the song in worship? Why or why not.

EXAMPLE A

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD by Chris Tomlin

The splendor of a King, clothed in majesty. Let all the earth rejoice...
 All the earth rejoice.

He wraps himself in Light, and darkness tries to hide and trembles at his voice...
 Trembles at his voice.

How great is our God, sing with me. How great is our God, and all will see.
 How great, how great is our God.

Age to age he stands. And time is in his hands.
 Beginning and the end. Beginning and the end.

The Godhead Three in One. Father, Spirit, Son.
 The Lion and the Lamb. The Lion and the Lamb.

Name above all names, Worthy of our praise. My heart will sing, "How great is our God."

How great is our God, sing with me.
 How great is our God, and all will see.
 How great, how great is our God.

EXAMPLE B

FROM THE INSIDE OUT by Joel Houston

A thousand times I've failed.
Still your mercy remains.
And if I stumble again
I'm caught in your grace.
Everlasting, your light will shine.
When all else fails,
Never-ending, your glory goes
Beyond all fame.

In my heart and my soul
I give you control.
Consume me from the inside out Lord.
Let justice and praise
Become my embrace
To love you from the inside out.

Everlasting, your light will shine.
When all else fails
Never-ending, your glory goes
Beyond all fame.
And the cry of my heart
Is to bring you praise
From the inside out,
Lord, my soul cries out.

Your will above all else
My purpose remains,
The art of losing myself
In bringing you praise.
Everlasting, your light will shine.
When all else fails
Never-ending, your glory goes
Beyond all fame.

EXAMPLE C

SPEAK, O LORD by Keith Getty
& Stewart Townend

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
To receive the food of your Holy Word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail,
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, as your Church is built
And you fill the earth with your glory.

EXAMPLE D

EVERLASTING GOD by Brenton Brown

Strength will rise
As we wait upon the Lord.
We will wait upon the Lord.
We will wait upon the Lord.

Strength will rise
As we wait upon the Lord.
We will wait upon the Lord.
We will wait upon the Lord.

Our God, you reign forever,
Our hope, our strong deliverer,

You are the everlasting God,
The everlasting God.
You do not faint.
You won't grow weary.

You're the defender of the weak.
You comfort those in need.
You lift us up on wings like eagles.

Repeats two more times

EXAMPLE E

THE SAVIOR IS WAITING — author unknown

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart
Why don't you let Him come in?
There's nothing in this world to keep you apart
What is your answer to Him?

Refrain

Time after time
He has waited before
And now He is waiting again
To see if you are willing
To open the door
Oh, how He wants to come in.

If you'll take one step
Toward the Savior, my friend,
You'll find His arms open wide.
Receive Him, and all of your darkness will end
Within your heart He'll abide.

Refrain

EXAMPLE G

WELCOME, HAPPY MORNING by Venantius Fortunatus

"Welcome, happy morning!" Age to age shall say;
Hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!"
Lo, the Dead is living, God forevermore!
Him, their true Creator, all his works adore.
"Welcome, happy morning!" age to age shall say;
Hell today is vanquished; heaven is won today!"

Maker and Redeemer, Life and Health of all,
God from heaven beholding human nature's fall,
Of the Father's Godhead, You, the only Son,
Mankind to deliver manhood didst put on.
"Welcome, happy morning!" age to age shall say;
Hell today is vanquished; heaven is won today!"

He, of life the author, death did undergo,
Trod the path of darkness, saving strength to show.
Come, then, True and Faithful, now fulfill your word;
This is your third morning—Rise, O buried Lord!
"Welcome, happy morning!" age to age shall say;
Hell today is vanquished; heaven is won today!"

Free the souls long prisoned, bound with Satan's chain;
All that now is fallen raise to life again.
Show your face in brightness; Shine in every land
As in Eden's garden when the world began.
"Welcome, happy morning!" age to age shall say;
Hell today is vanquished; heaven is won today!"

EXAMPLE F

WHY SHOULD CROSS & TRIAL GRIEVE ME
by Paul Gerhardt

Why should cross and trial grieve me?
Christ is near
With his cheer;
Never will he leave me.
Who can rob me of the heaven
That God's Son
For me won
When his life was given?

When life's troubles rise to meet me,
Though their weight
May be great,
They will not defeat me.
God, my loving Savior, sends them;
He who knows
All my woes
Knows how best to end them.

God gives me my days of gladness,
And I will
Trust him still
When he send me sadness.
God is good;
His love attends me
Day by day,
Come what may,
Guides me and defends me.

Since I know God never fails me,
In his voice
I'll rejoice
When grim death assails me.
Trusting in my Savior's merit,
Safe at last,
Troubles past,
I shall heav'n inherit.

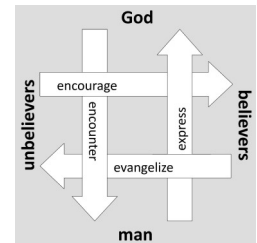
EXAMPLE H

LORD, I GIVE YOU MY HEART
by Michael W. Smith

This is my desire, to honor you.
Lord with all my heart I worship you.
All I have within me, I give you praise.
All that I adore is in you.
Lord I give you my heart.
I give you my soul.
I live for you alone.
Every breath that I take,
Every moment I'm awake,
Lord have your way in me.

- It has been said that you can liken hymns and worship songs to food. Some of it is like steak. Some of it is like cake. What is the point of that comparison?

- In lesson one, we saw that worship has four dimensions. Discuss the role that the worship song texts play in fulfilling each of those dimensions. What type of songs or hymns might be best in that dimension?



- Sainted pastor Kurt Eggert (project director for *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*) once said, “Let the poet have his room.” What do you think he meant?

Part 3: The style of music

- Agree or disagree: The style of music is always neutral. The only thing that matters is the text. Give the reason for your answer.
- In a group or by yourself, take a minute to write down as many music styles as you can think of. Then make note of how, if at all, that style of music affects you. Perhaps you will note the emotion that style most commonly elicits in you. Or maybe you will note when that style of music is most commonly used.

<i>Style of music</i>	<i>Thoughts about that style</i>

- Agree or disagree: The style of music is always neutral. The only thing that matters is the text. Give the reason for your answer.

- Philippians 4:8 says, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Are there any styles of music which tend to make you think of things that are “noble and right”? Are there any styles of music which tend to make you think of things which are ignoble and wrong?
- If you remove the ignoble and wrong words from the music, do you completely forget the ignoble and wrong thoughts?
- Try the following.
 - ◊ Sing *Amazing Grace* (CW379) to the tune of *Joy to the World* (CW62).
 - ◊ Sing *Amazing Grace* to the tune of the theme song for Gilligan’s Island.
 - ◊ Sing *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* (CW411) to the tune of *Thy Strong Word* (CW280).

What does this exercise demonstrate about the style of music we use for worship?

- Evaluate: Since what matters is the text, and since the style of music can get in the way of us perceiving that text, we would do best to chant everything in worship rather than use melodies and tunes for our worship music.
- Imagine over the course of a couple of weeks, a congregation sings the following: *The King of Glory Comes* (CW363), *His Battle Ended There* (CW146), *There Is a Balm in Gilead* (CW564), and *The King of Love My Shepherd Is* (CW375). Just consider the tune of those hymns. By using all those, what message has that congregation sent?

Talk about it

- St. Paul writes, “Everything is permissible’ — but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’ —but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 23,24,31). How does that guide us in matter of choosing our worship music?
- There are examples of music style-text tension even in our hymnal. What do you think a World War II veteran thinks about when we sing, “God, We Praise You,” which is sung to the tune AUSTRIA? What does this illustrate about the struggle to musical match text and style?
- List some ways we can keep the bar high for the quality of music we use in our worship.
- How, if at all, has this lesson helped you appreciate or get more out of the music we use in worship?

Summary and final thoughts