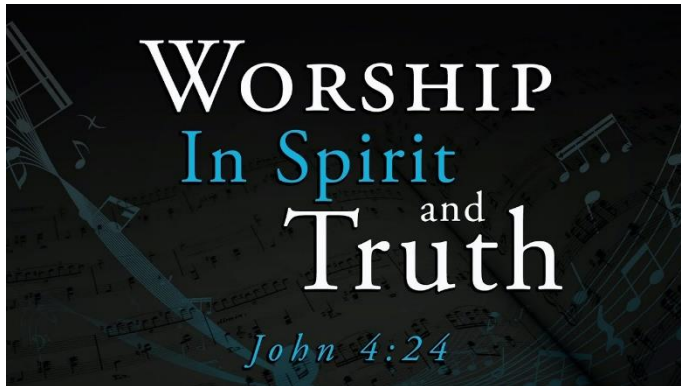


How Do We Worship God?

(“Examining the phrase “in spirit and truth”)

John 4:23-24

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Worship wars are prevalent in the Church today. There are different types and styles of so-called worship which are related to musical expression. Genres such as Christian wrap, Christian alternative rock, Christian metal, Christian urban, Christian hardcore are brought into the Church and many

people nonchalantly conclude: “God, this is what I think of You, this is how I view You, and You must take the worship that I present to You.” But would Jesus settle for this type of loose attitude toward worship? Does God accept any kind of worship? Let’s find out by looking at what Jesus taught about worship in John 4:23-24. Some running commentary of these verses will give the overall picture and then we can further digest what Jesus taught about worship.

Jesus begins in John 4:23 by stating:

“**But the hour cometh** (a specific time when there will be a transformation of worship experienced with the Father, the time when God who is spirit in His essential being indwells His people, so they can experience a new inner awareness and relationship with the Father – 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 4:6), **and now is** (In some sense this new relationship was inaugurated and occurring ahead of time for His people with Christ’s incarnational presence on earth who was a revelation of the Father’s essence as God within the Trinitarian oneness of the Godhead – John 1:1, 14, 18), **when the true worshippers** (those who are saved) **shall worship the Father in spirit** (in the human spirit and inner man, the heart, where real true and spiritual worship occurs without external religion and rites, without pagan ceremonies and concepts, and without structural buildings, Temples, mountaintops, or stained glass windows) **and in truth** (truth that reveals the revelation of the person of Jesus Christ and which upholds God’s character and ways in worship – John 14:6; Ps. 145:17): **for the**

Father seeketh such to worship him” (referring to those who are worshipping the Father from within their hearts and not merely from without through structured religious practices, those who are worshipping in accordance with God’s divine revelation - not with fleshly or pagan ideas and worldly expressions in worship contrary to the truth of God’s Word and the representation of His spiritual existence).

In John 4:24 Jesus concludes Christ’s thoughts with these words:

“God is a Spirit (or “A spirit God is” - completely invisible in His essence, existence, but also spiritual in the expression of Himself as God – He is not a lifeless stone, tree, or mountain deity): **and they that worship him must worship him in spirit** (within the realm of their spiritual existence – the inner man and heart – not merely through rituals and temples) **and in truth”** (within the realm of revelatory truth about Jesus Christ, God’s righteous and holy ways, and without pagan ideas and expressions of worship).

One thing is certain, we should never face an issue such as worship without Biblical directives. This is what Jesus is doing in these verses. He is giving us Scriptural guidelines to follow which should be applied to our worship. We have unchanging Biblical directives for every issue of life.

In these verses Jesus is moving us away from Samaritan worship which was a paganized form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5) to Biblical worship that originates from within (“in your heart” - Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It’s clear that Jesus is contrasting inward with outward worship and truthful with pagan worship (“Ye worship ye know not what” – John 4:22). His emphasis is on the inner heart where all true worship occurs and the kind of worship that God the Father accepts. The human spirit is the highest aspect of man’s being, that essence of the image of God in man which distinguishes him from the rest of the physical creation, that capacity which enables him to inwardly commune with God.

Proverbs 20:27 says, “The spirit of man is the candle (lamp) of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (our inward human existence). This means our human spirit is that aspect in us which can connect with God and experience a relationship with Him. The spirit is the inner conscience that throws light on our thoughts, motives, affections, and actions, approving or reproofing our innermost

thoughts and intents (Rom. 2:14-15). In short, it's the place where God works and communicates to us (1 Cor. 2:11).

To worship God "in spirit" is therefore to worship Him in our innermost being where God as a spiritual being communicates to us. But at the same time, it emphasizes spirituality in our time of worship since God in His essential nature is also a spiritual and holy being (Heb. 1:3; 1 John 1:5). In addition, to worship "in truth" explains that our worship must align with God's revelatory truth found in the Bible concerning Jesus Christ and sanctification which opposes all pagan forms of worship that reflect worldliness and carnality (John 4:22).

God is not limited by time and space. When people are born again (John 3:6-7) their spirits can commune with God anywhere. Our spiritual existence, where we fellowship and worship God, is the opposite of what is material and earthly like Mount Gerizim worship. Christ makes worship a matter of the heart. But He also makes it a matter of truth which means it is always in harmony with the nature and will of God. It is the opposite of all that is false. So the issue is not where a person worships (in buildings, specific locations of worship), but to whom and how they worship.

Above all else, Jesus was teaching that the important thing is that people come into a saving relationship with God so they can worship the Father "in spirit and truth." This essentially means we are to worship in our inward being where God communicates with His children, in accordance with the spiritual nature of God Himself (without carnality), but also in accordance with the complete revelation of truth found in the Bible concerning Jesus Christ, God, and sanctification. In short, worship does not occur in pagan temples (architectures) and with pagan concepts about Jesus Christ and God. It occurs in the heart and aligns with both the spiritual nature of God and truth stated in God's Word concerning Jesus Christ, the revelation of God Himself, including sanctified forms of worship that reflect God's character and nature.

True worship is intimate and informed. The extremes of dead *orthodoxy* and worship (truth and no spirit) and zealous *heterodoxy* or deviation and opposition from accepted norms of worship (spirit and no truth) must be avoided.

Although the two ideas behind “spirit” and “truth” are interrelated they are both conveying something unique in relation to worship.

1. The Location and characteristic of worship – “in spirit.”

Jesus begins by addressing the location of worship (“in spirit” – vs. 24) which emphasizes what is happening inside the worshipper and reveals the characteristic of all true worship. Since God is himself a spirit being in His nature, He must be worshiped in (and by) the realm (or medium) that is akin to His nature—namely, man’s spirit. Worship occurs within the realm of our human “spirit” which refers to our inner life, the place where we possess a relationship with God who is also spirit or invisible in nature (Eph. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:4). The fact that “God is Spirit” (or spirit – vs. 23) represents the classical statement on the nature of God. The phrase means that God is invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27) as opposed to the physical or material nature of man (1:18; 3:6).

Pastor Steven Cole writes:

“While it is true that God is a spirit, Jesus does not mean here that God is one spirit among many. Rather, He is emphasizing the kind of being God is: He is spirit. He is not material. He does not exist in a body that can be seen or touched, like our bodies. Any physical representation of God, whether by an idol or by a picture (as a white-haired old man), is a misrepresentation of God. While the Bible sometimes uses human terms to refer to God (the eyes of the Lord, the arm of the Lord, etc.), these are only analogies to help our limited ability to grasp what God is like.”

Paul describes God as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God” (1 Tim. 1:17). He speaks again of God in 1 Timothy 6:16, and concludes: “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.” The point John is making is that we must worship the invisible God within our own invisible human spirit where He resides and makes Himself known.

It seems in this instance the word “spirit” (vs. 24) does not refer specifically to the Holy Spirit but to the human spirit which is the location where worship occurs. Of course, the coming of God the Spirit (“the hour cometh” - vs. 23) to dwell in the hearts of His children means the Holy Spirit would



inspire a new form of inward worship that would be directed to the Father and Christ (John 14:26; 16:13-15). At this point, worship would be internalized in a new and dynamic way in the hearts of Christ's followers through the Holy Spirit's ministry.

Nevertheless, Jesus' point is that a person must not worship simply by external or outward conformity to religious rituals, rules, rites, and in specific locations but he must worship inwardly ("in spirit") with the proper heart attitude toward the Father and a desire to fellowship with Him and honor Him. Outward worship without the inward (spirit) is intrinsically impersonal. The locational phrase "in spirit" relates to one's mind, soul, and heart – when our entire inner being is offered to God in the time of worship. It's a sincere type of worship that occurs inwardly – not merely outwardly in conformity to certain liturgy, locations of worship, and longstanding pagan traditions. The Bible teaches us that "the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

The issue that the Samaritan woman brings up focuses on the externals of the centuries-old controversy of where to worship God - Mount Gerazim or Mount Zion in Jerusalem (John 4:20). However, Jesus cuts through the external aspects of the controversy and teaches that the focus of our worship is to be internal – not external. In a similar way, much of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) with its stage performances, flashing lights, and entertainment has nothing to do with true worship for its merely external. True spiritual worship occurs on the inside ("the spirit;" "the inner man;" and "the hidden man of the heart" - Eph. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:4) and is opposed to the external or visible without any inward reality.

Tozer again comments:

"The church that can't worship must be entertained. And men who can't lead a church to worship must provide the entertainment. That is why we have the great evangelical heresy here today - the heresy of religious entertainment."

Jesus is also conveying the characteristic of all true worship when He mentions about worshipping "in spirit." All our worship is to be spiritual in nature for it occurs in the realm of the human spirit where God's life and nature exist (John 3:6; Eph. 2:1). This is the opposite of soulish or carnal worship which comes from the soul – the place where the sin nature resides and manufactures carnality (1 Cor. 2:14; Jam. 3:15).

We should understand that God's children must follow the promptings of the new nature as they worship God – not the old nature. Our worship must be spiritual in nature and not soulish in expression which is reminiscent of the old way of life (1 Pet. 4:2-4). This excludes all forms of paganized worship which does not reflect God's life and nature. All our worship must not only be *internalized* but also *sanctified* in nature for it is to represent the indwelling presence of a holy and righteous God who takes residence within the temple of our body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Jesus was inferring this when He mentions, “But the hour cometh (*when God would indwell His people through the Spirit's ministry*), and now is (*in some sense this was inaugurated with the presence of Christ dwelling with His people on earth*), when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth (*a new form of worship that occurs inwardly and based upon the revelation of Christ*): for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23). The Holy Spirit was coming to personally and permanently indwell future worshippers which would turn their bodies into God's dwelling place (2 Cor. 6:16). Since God indwells us, this means our outward worship must align with the nature and character of God the Spirit who lives within us. In short, it must be spiritual and not carnal. The Holy Spirit would indwell our human spirit and make us into God's temple.

Kent Brandenburg speaks to both the origin and nature of all true worship which today should be guided by the Holy Spirit's presence within the heart of the true worshipper. He writes: “A manifestation of the Holy Spirit it not a personal feeling or an externally manufactured response to God. Everything that is spiritual would be consistent with every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. Everything that is spiritual would be exclusive of that which is a work of the flesh. There would be nothing sensual, no provision of the flesh, no inordinate affection, no disorder, and nothing out of control. Something spiritual would not be stimulated by gimmicks. It is not energized by artificial methods. Worship is not an external activity for which an environment must be created.”

One misconception about worship is that when people have trouble worshipping, Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) will create worship. In other words, Christian

Rock Music will create the atmosphere for worship to occur and many have called this “the mood for worship.” But true worship is not created through outward stimuli or by experiencing a certain mood. It is not conjured up by a specific atmosphere. The stimulus for all worship is the truth. This is what Jesus meant when He said we are to “worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Truth is the starting point of all worship (Ps. 119:15, 23-24, 48, 78, 148; 143:5) – not a sound or feeling. It’s the truth that relates to God’s greatness, holiness, grace, and mercy revealed in Scripture; it’s the truth about Jesus Christ; it’s the truth about worshipping God reverently because of His impeccable holiness (Ps. 89:7; Isaiah 6:1-3; Heb. 12:28). More on this later.

Music gives expression to our love and adoration that we have for God. But the motivation for worship has to come from somewhere else, not from music. It should originate from God’s life and nature within the human spirit. Music enhances and enriches our love for God, but the motive for all our music is not a specific musical sound – it’s truth. This means we don’t need a mood created by some form of music that in many cases shifts the mind into neutral and generates a kind of empty and mindless feeling. In fact, the mood that is created by much of the CCM is a very dangerous mood in a local church. A certain kind of rebellious sound (a mood of sensuality) can actually create the mood for wrong affections, loose morals, and the sensual.

In addition, worship is something that is to be part of our everyday lives as we reflect upon God’s character and ways and extend our gratitude to Him through meditation, prayer, and singing (Ps. 1:2; 77:12; 100:2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It’s not something we artificially create through the sounds of secularized rock music.



If you attend CCM rock concerts or worship centers, you will often find yourself in the dark, and there will be a sensual kind of music playing which appeals to the flesh at one level or another. There may also be lights flashing, smoke coming out of the stage, and other kinds of outward stimulants. But all these artificial stimulants which are allegedly

designed to create worship have absolutely nothing to do with true worship for all true worship occurs inwardly and reflects the truth of God’s character or light (1 John 1:5) and holiness (not darkness and the flesh). Worship is not to be something jumpstarted by rhythms, rock beats, and generated by a theater atmosphere. We will revisit this truth about spiritual worship at another point in our study.

For now, think what Psalm 4:4 teaches us about internal and spiritual worship: “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.”

“And now the wants are told,
That brought Thy children to thy knee;
Here, lingering still, we ask for naught
But simply worship thee.”

When Jesus spoke of worshipping “in spirit” He was teaching two main ideas. Let’s reiterate and restate what we have learned as we look at this important text and teaching on worship.

A. Sincere worship as opposed to cold external worship.

Worship that stems from the “spirit” (inner man) is worship that is set in contrast from mere outward forms of paganized worship. It’s worship that is sincere, honest, genuine, and from the heart (it’s without hypocrisy). This is one of the characteristics of worship. All true worship is done in accordance with God’s revelatory



truth but at the same time it’s sincere, God-centered worship, rather than just going through motions, or worshipping for what we can get out of it, instead of offering ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2). Worship should never be selfish but giving to the Lord.

We must remember that true worship does not involve personal gratification and self-seeking but giving back to God (Ps. 29:1; 95:6; 96:8; 106:1; 107:1; 136:1; 138:2; 1 Chr.16:29; Ex. 28:1,3, 41; 34:14). Our English word for worship comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word which conveys giving worth, respect, and reverence to the object

of one's worship, which for the true believer is God. When we worship, we are actually giving back to God His worth through prayer, praise, and personal communion (Rev. 4:10-11).

Worship is God's revelation about Himself to us through His Word (John 4:24) and creation (Ps. 19:1-3) which results in a reverent response to His revelation (Jn. 9:37-38) by our declaration of who He is, His ways, what He has done for us, and what He means to us. Worship is ascribing to God His worth, or stating and affirming His supreme value in light of Who He is, what He has done, and what He means to our life. In its simplest form we might define worship as the act of giving back to God His rightful worth through the humble acts of prayer, thanksgiving, singing, meditation, preaching and even Christian service and sacrifice. It is showing God the worth that He holds in our life.

Jesus wants us to abolish the earthly symbols of worship and come into the reality of true worship that emanates from the realm of our inner "spirit" where we sense God's presence, fellowship, and are ready to offer our sincere worship to Him as the only true God. We do not need temples, buildings, altars, candles, prayer beads, and other aspects of religiosity to worship God.



When Jesus said in John 4:24, "the hour cometh, and now is" (a reference to a new form of worship) He was making an important point. For the Samaritans, Mount Gerizim had been a sacred site for pagan worship for centuries. On this mountain the Samaritans had built a temple to rival the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. But Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the physical location of worship is not important.

Temples and tabernacles, cities and mountains, all of these things were fading symbols of worship. Jesus who stood in their midst pointed to the spiritual reality of personal worship of with God for He was the revelation of the Father's existence as God. In other words, Jesus wants us to abolish the earthly symbols of worship and come into the reality of true worship that emanates from the realm of our inner

“spirit” where we sense God’s presence, fellowship, and are ready to offer our sincere worship to Him as the only true God. We do not need temples, buildings, altars, candles, prayer beads, and other aspects of religiosity to worship God.

William MacDonald remarked:

“In true worship, a person enters into the presence of God by faith, and pours out his love, praise, adoration and homage. Soulless worship, on the other hand, is occupied with beautiful buildings and ecclesiastical furniture, with elaborate ceremonies, with brocaded priestly garments, and with whatever appeals to the emotions.”

It’s interesting that many Christians have made a ritual out of Contemporary Christian Music and are actually worshipping their form of worship instead of worshipping God from the inward depths of their heart. I’m not making a blanket statement about every Christian who is part of the modern music movement of our present generation. However, there is a type of glamor, showmanship, and entertainment in much of the so-called worship of today, which can quickly cause a worshipper to lose sight of the very One that he is to be worshipping. Instead of “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) many are looking for their sights, sounds, and stimulation of rock music to get a psychological high. Many churches have become entertainment centers instead of worship centers, even though they might deem themselves a worship center. Going to church become “showtime for the sheep.”

David Moss states:

“When the activities of a church service are directed toward a human audience, it is inaccurate to call it worship. The church is not a forum for the performing arts nor is God gratified by man entertaining himself.”

Jesus was teaching that God is incorporeal (invisible) in His eternal being or essence (John 4:24). This means God is without a body, He is not material or composed of parts. Since this is true, we worship Him within our human spirit where He can openly reveal Himself to us and where we can offer our hearts to Him in genuine praise and worship without rock rhythms and entertaining paraphernalia. Our worship does not occur in buildings and with pagan rituals which was the concept of worship for the Samaritans. In this context Jesus was apparently contrasting integrity and reality in worship with the externalism and hypocrisy that marked so much worship in His day with the Pharisees and scribes (Mark 7:1-6).

In John 4:23-24 Jesus is teaching that true worship is not confined to certain pagan places, and it does not consist of mere outward conformity to religious standards and legalistic duties (Isa. 29:13; 48:1; Jer. 12:1–2; Matt. 15:7–9). Instead, true worship occurs in the “spirit” or “the hidden man of the heart” (1 Pet. 3:4) and “inner man” (Eph. 3:16) where God’s invisible nature and life is communicated to the believer which creates a response of fellowship and worship to Him. All true worship originated in the realm of our spirit.

Homer Kent brings Christ’s statement together:

“God Himself is spirit, and true worship is an act of the spirit (v. 24). It is an error to expect ritual or physical environment to produce genuine worship of God. The presence of Christ on earth made more direct worship possible (v. 23). He was the highest and most complete revelation of the Father (Heb. 1:2). He is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) and the One in whom we see the Father (John 1:18; 14:9). Therefore Jesus could say to the woman, ‘The time now is’ (John 4:23).”

But the hour is coming (vs. 23) when we will worship forever with the new inward realization, awareness, and intimacy of the Father’s presence within us as the Holy Spirit reveals the Father to us in a new intimate away.

Galatians 4:6

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

Romans 8:15

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

The inward worship will be a new revelation of God’s presence within each believer. The hour was coming and today it’s here with the revelation of the Father’s indwelling presence, intimacy, and fellowship. We are the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16) and share a dynamic living union with the Father through the Spirit’s New Testament ministry.

So the first way we worship God is through our human spirit which is the location of all true worship and worshippers, the place where God reveals Himself to us and where we can in a sincere manner offer ourselves to Him in worship and praise.

Hebrews 10:22

“Let us draw near with a true (*sincere*) heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Again, the inward is set in contrast to the outward. Worship does not consist of outward rituals, buildings, masses, and liturgies but in the inward reality of experiencing God’s life and presence within one’s heart. Worship is an internal matter – not external emphasis (Matt. 15:8). This is why a Christian can sit in silence and “meditate” or “muse” (ponder and reflect) on God as we worship Him (Ps. 143:5) without rock beats, synthesizer, and loud noise. Sadly, we can



become strangers to the ability to meditate in silence. “When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* mediate on thee in the *night* watches” (Ps. 63:6).

Truth be told, we don’t need outward stimuli but only the inward stimulus of God’s fellowship and the revelation of Himself to our hearts (human spirits) which causes us to break out in worship and praise (Ps. 9:1; 57:7; 86:12; 111:1). The inward reality of worship should never be replaced by the outward edifices of buildings, pagan ideas, musical manipulation, or anything else but God Himself.

Someone wrote:

“I’ll bring You more than a song, because the song itself is not what You’ve required. You search much deeper within than the way things appear. You’re looking into my heart.”

The importance of worshipping “in spirit” (John 4:23-24) connotes inner worship as opposes to the need for outward stimuli. Time Magazine once recorded that “rock ‘n roll has by its very beat and sound always celebrated sexuality.” (October 31, 1969, p. 49). The entire rock world seems to recognize and even flaunt the sensual through the repetitive strong beats of Rock Music, through indecent motions and movements spawned by this music, and other associations that go with Rock Music, wallowing in this music because it appeals so strongly to the flesh. Rock Music and

the motions that go to with it discard traditional and Biblical restraints (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Christians should not listen to this style of music which causes these same types of physical responses or reactions which stem from the realm of the old nature – not the new nature.

No matter what the motivation of the band/performer is people are still reacting to the carnal music in a carnal manner, regardless of what the lyrics communicate. A spiritual response toward music is when internal worship is emphasized over external stimuli, since John 4:24 states, “they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.” The location of all true worship occurs within our “spirit” (our inner life - the place of God’s dwelling and life). According to Jesus, the outward stimulus of rock beats and entertainment are not part of true worship. They are outward stimuli designed to feed the fleshly part of man’s existence for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). In other words, you cannot remake that which fleshly. You cannot bring something clean of that which is unclean (Job 14:4).

Externalism reduces worship to the right place, the right lighting, the right time, the right words, the right demeanor, the right clothing, the right environment, and the right mood. This was the extreme type of worship represented not only in pagan worship but also the legalistic worship of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Forms of external worship in the Scriptures are seen to be vain repetitions and giving gifts to God in order to be seen be men (Matt. 6:3-8).

Man has the tendency to place too much emphasis on the external and not the internal in his time of worship. Many times the worldly entertainment and mood setting sounds of Rock Music which revolve around the external is mistaken for true worship. In actuality, they are nothing more than external worship. Many today are actually worshipping at the altar of sound, performance, style, and technique. In all of this, God is not getting the glory nor is true “in the spirit” worship taking place.

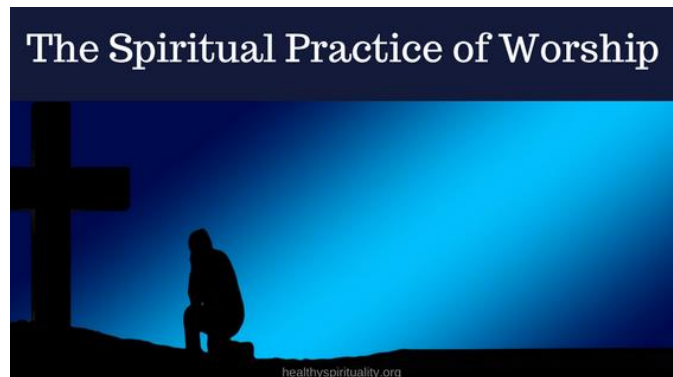
Charles Spurgeon describes true worship in this way:

“True worship lies in your heart paying reverence to him, your soul obeying him, and your inner nature coming into conformity to his own nature, by the work of his Spirit in your soul.”

This leads to our next point.

B. Spiritual worship as opposed to carnal worship.

It goes without saying that worshipping “in spirit” (John 4:23-24) as Jesus taught has overtones of the spiritual nature of true worship as opposed to the carnal forms of worship of the Samaritans. As previously mentioned, this is worship that reflects God’s nature of holiness and righteousness. The fact that God



is “spirit” can also be understood in the same sense that He is “light” (1 Jn. 1:5) and “love” (1 Jn. 4:16). In other words, God is not merely a metaphysical being who lives in the spirit world transcending the laws of nature but is spiritual (holy and righteous) in His eternal being. *God is not only spiritual (invisible) in His existence but spiritual in His eternal essence.* This means worship must by necessity include spiritual worship that reflects God’s nature (not man’s depravity). Worshipping God “in spirit” it to declare who God is in His eternal being and character – He is holy and spiritual in His essence and existence. So what is occurring on the outside naturally corresponds with that which is occurring on the inside.

It’s within the realm of the regenerate human spirit where God’s life and nature exists through the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying ministry (Eph. 2:1-2; John 3:6-7; 1 Cor. 14:15; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2 Cor. 3:18). This means our human spirit is the place where we expresses ourselves to God in a type of worship that reflects His unchanging character and ways. So worshipping “in spirit” is a reflection of God’s nature. This means all our worship should be spiritual in its characteristics or that which corresponds with God’s nature of holiness (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Carnal worship, which incorporates heathen aspects into worship, was practiced by the Samaritans. Jesus was also teaching that God is completely spiritual in His essence as the eternal God (John 4:24). Therefore, our own worship should be “in spirit” which also reflects the idea that worship should also be spiritual in every aspect, in its source, object, subject, and method, so that it properly represents God’s true character and ways. True worship is spiritual, not carnal, fleshly, or worldly. The eternal God is not only a spirit being (invisible) but a spiritual being that exists in perfect holiness and righteousness.

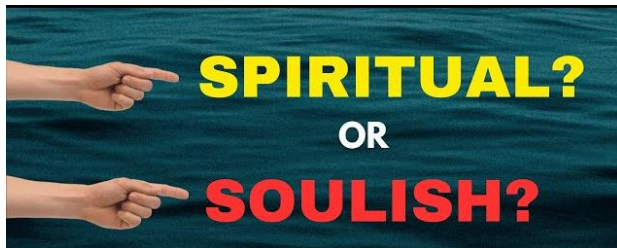
Psalm 145:17

“The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”

Those who wish to worship the Father must do so in a manner compatible with His essential nature which is spiritual in makeup and outward expression.

Leon Morris writes:

“Since God is spirit, our worship must be in spirit; it must be of a spiritual kind. Worship must always be such as to agree with the kind of God being worshipped.”



The essential reason worship of God must be spiritual is that God is a spiritual being. This means Christians should not worship God in any manner that may seem attractive or pleasing to them. To worship “in spirit” would also mean to

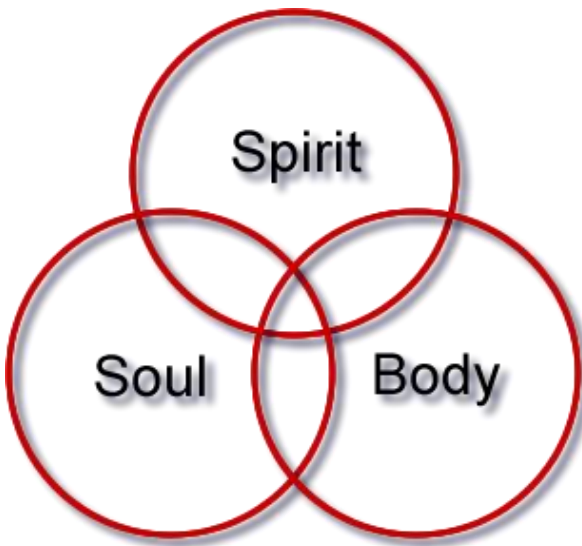
also worship after the pattern of God’s essential nature which is a spiritual nature that reflects righteousness and holiness. In other words, our worship must reflect God’s essential and eternal nature which is spiritual. Worship is not a quest to fulfill our emotional feelings and wants but to be devoted to God’s essential nature and character which is spirituality and not carnality.

If a Christian chooses music on the basis of how it makes them feel, they are doomed to follow the fleshly part of their human existence (1 Pet. 1:14-15) instead of the spiritual part of their existence. When we conclude, “This stuff does not thrill me like the CCM” we are admitting that we are following music for feeling and fleshly reasons instead of spiritual reasons. Rock music is by its very nature sensual and emotional. It seeks to captivate the physical part of man’s existence (soulsh aspect of man) instead of the spiritual part of his existence. If we are not careful, we can become excited about carnal entertainment and not the spiritual edification that comes from the truths of Scripture. Therefore, we must learn to approach music on a spiritual and not physical level of existence (Gal. 5:17). To do so, we must exercise the new nature and not allow the old nature to dominate our lives through needing music to raise our adrenaline.

James 3:15 speaks of that which “is earthly, sensual (soulsh), and devilish.” Jude also uses the term “sensual” or soulsh (Jude 19) which refers to that part of man’s

existence where the sin nature functions and thrives (1 Cor. 2:14). A sensual person is actually a soulish person which means they are allowing their life to be dominated by the fleshly and soulish part of their human existence and not the spiritual part of their human existence. A Christian's spirit is where God's nature and life exists and promotes godliness, holiness, and righteousness within his life and decisions (Eph. 2:1-2) and opposes the flesh (Gal. 5:17).

When people talk about "soul music" they are referring to a kind of pop music incorporating elements of rock rhythms, the blues with its intensity of feeling and earthiness, and the Gospel, which originated in African American communities. But the emphasis on the "soul" is noteworthy. That which originates from and is governed by the soul reflects the old nature. Soulsh music with its rock rhythms is fleshly music for it stems from the soul of man which has not been influenced by the spiritual part of man's existence.



Man is a tripartite being consisting of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23). To simplify, the human **spirit** within a born-again Christian is under the influence of God and the new nature (John 3:6). It is where we worship the Lord, fellowship with Him, and it's where Christians respond to truth and what is right.

The human **soul** represents personhood (feelings, emotions, mind, decisions, will) and is where the sin or fallen nature operates and thrives. The soulsh part of

our existence can be led astray by the fleshly nature of Adam that still resides within us (Rom. 7:18-23) but the spiritual part of our human existence through the Holy Spirit's work is always trying to control us and bring our soul into subjection to God's nature and standard (Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 5:25). The soul is the entire personality of people (what we think, what we feel, how we respond to outward stimuli).

The **body** is the vehicle which can be used for both good and evil. It responds to the tangible and visual aspects of life including music though the influence of the soul.

The body responds to the high volume, heavy beat, and rhythmic confusion of rock music as it is being controlled by the soulish or base nature of our existence.

Think of it this way. The inner soul (through the vehicle of the human body) follows the rhythm, volume, and other elements presented in music, whether it's good or bad. Therefore, the orderly arrangement of music is very important. It should first respond to the realm of our spirit (representing God's life and nature), then to our soul (our emotions, desires, and decision-making center) which is being properly influenced by the spirit, and finally to the body. Rock music reverses the order and begins with the body (the physical) which adversely affects the desires and decisions of the soul, and which leaves out the spirit. This means our inner spirit should have the highest priority in our time of worship – not our body and soul.

If the spirit (the highest priority in worship and expression) is responding to godly music, then our soul and body will follow what is right and godly. But if our body and soul is being controlled by high volume, heavy beats, rock rhythms, and other aspects of ungodly music, then we are following in some measure the dictates of the sin nature and not the new nature. When the order of appeal is not correct, distortion and confusion result. The order should be spirit, soul, and body – not body, soul, and spirit. A God of perfect order (1 Cor. 14:40) has created us to function in this way so we can in our time of worship musically glorify Him.

Beware of mixing soulish with spiritual music. This is what Christian rock musicians seek to do by joining acceptable Christian lyrics while at the same time using a sound cultivated for sinful pleasures and rebellion against God. The two (Christian lyrics and unchristian sound) causes spiritual conflict within us. It not only brings a mixture between good and evil, but it also eventually causes spiritual delusion or deception within the realm of our hearts (Jer. 17:10). Sadly, during the last days "Men shall be lovers of their own selves" and "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). This can happen when we are worshipping our form of worship (rock music) and worship to greedily get our fix or high (our Jesus buzz) that we think we need to experience worship.

When the appeal of the body or soul is given highest priority in the music and mixed with the soulish part of our existence, we can never know whether the spiritual part of man's existence can hear the call to truth. At best, some element of the spiritual

may be heard, at worst, no spiritual part of our human existence may be a guiding force in our worship.

A study was done of teenagers and their music and was released in *Psychology Today* under the title "It's the Sound That Does It." The researchers reported that 70 percent of teens said they judged songs (like or disliked them) more by the sound than by the words. Many, in fact, did not even know the words of their favorite songs. Again, the sound of rock music is conveying something. It conveys rebellion and rejection of God's righteous ways. This is why Christians should not adopt the rock idiom into their music and worship. It's cultural and musical rebellion against God and whenever we seek to join the good with the bad, we create distortion, confusion, and to some degree ignite the unspiritual element in our souls.

John Coblenz, writing in "Music in Biblical Perspective," concludes:

"I believe when music with a wrongly arranged appeal is used to present the Gospel, we cannot be assured of the genuineness of those who respond. To dress up the Gospel in fleshly or emotional or artistic appeals, whether in music or preaching, for that matter, is to blanket the power of the Gospel. Those, in other words, who are led to Christ on an emotional trip will likely be carried away from Him on the same emotions."

This sounds like the person our Lord described in Matthew 13:20-21.

Coblenz concludes:

"My point is that music which is heaviest in its physical, emotional, or artistic appeal is inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that seeing this inconsistency, we should unapologetically avoid such music."

Rock has a primal beat, and the audience responds to it on a primal (soulful) level. Many Christians think that we are turned on to God through a rock beat, but they are only being turned on to their feelings and flesh. Worship does not mean that we get turned on to God through a specific sound but that we are tuned in to a holy God – His perfect ways, holiness, righteousness, love, mercy, grace, and faithfulness.

Spiritual worship and songs which originate from the spiritual part of man's existence where God's life and nature dwell should be the focus in all worship. The

term “spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) is a generic term referring to a variety of types of songs focused on Christian themes and experiences, but they are qualified by the word “spiritual.” The emphasis on the “spiritual” is important. This should be true of all Christian music. It must be spiritual in nature. This means that all songs should be spiritual in musical sound and content.

Both the words and the music (the vehicle carrying the words) must be spiritual in nature. Praise by its very nature is to be spiritual in substance, consisting of theological and Biblical truth, and by reflecting non-worldly musical sound. Even the first Christians and early church recognized and understood that their conversion to God through Christ required some significant changes in how they worshipped God, including the kind of music they used. Hence, there was an emphasis on “spiritual songs.”

The present culture has conditioned much of Christianity to the point where they cannot tell the difference between a sensuous type of crooning (sentimental, soft, and erotic type of singing) and the holy adoration expressed toward Jesus Christ.

Permit me to quote Tozer again:

“The cult of eros is seriously affecting the Church The influence of the erotic spirit is felt almost everywhere in evangelical circles. Much of the singing in certain types of meeting has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Ghost. Both words and music are designed to rouse the libidinous. Christ is courted with a familiarity that reveals a total ignorance of who He is. It is not reverent intimacy of the adoring saint but the impudent familiarity of the carnal lover.”

Here is an important question. Is your worship and music spiritual or soulish? Is it a mixture of these two elements? Let’s think about this. People can respond to an external, momentary, exciting, musical stimulus based on rock rhythms and entertaining music but not be responding in the realm of their spirit where the new nature dwells and operates in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. The Bible places an emphasis on spiritual songs, which are opposite and free from the expressions of carnal, fleshly, and worldly songs. Sensuality and spirituality are exact opposites. The nature of each necessitates the exclusion of the other. Conflict between the flesh and the spirit is a subject to considerable importance and discussion in Scripture (Col. 3:2; Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:5).



Ephesians 5:18-19 reminds us that one result of Spirit-filling is spiritual singing: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

“Speaking to yourselves is probably referring to speaking to one another, among other Christians, through our outward and public singing as stated in Colossians 3:16, where we admonish one another communicating truth to each another. We do this as we sing together in psalms (songs in Israel’s hymnbook – directly taken from the Bible) and hymns (songs that mention and reflect upon God) and spiritual songs” (songs related to different spiritual themes, songs which promote spirituality, Christian virtues, and victory.

Of course, with the mention of the “spiritual” we are once again reminded that all Christian songs are to be by definition spiritual in nature (not fleshly or worldly in their musical expression). Spiritual songs are songs that are rooted in the new nature and under the control of the Holy Spirit. They are spiritual in their design, they reflect the new way of life, and do not emanate from the soulish or fleshly part of man’s existence. Rock Music violates the music policy of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. Our music is to consist of spiritual songs (non-fleshly songs) which are designed to influence the spiritual part of man’s existence – not His fleshly existence. We might also add that Spirit filled music and worship (Eph. 5:18-19) is spiritual and controlled worship (Gal. 5:23) – not carnal and out of control worship.

Here is the point. If we are not worshipping God, then we are not filled with the Spirit of God. If we don’t take time to worship God, then we cannot be filled with the Spirit. If we have gone dry in our worship, then we are no longer filled with the Spirit of God. And if you are no longer worshipping God, you have lost the true purpose and meaning of your Christian life and existence. Joyful worship is what puts meaning into your life. Without it, we dry up spiritually and we will not be filled with the Spirit.

William Temple gave this definition of worship:

“For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose.”

Again, it is interesting to observe that in the context of being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), Paul immediately talks about spiritual songs and singing which are to be reflected in our time of worship. This indicates Holy Spirit filled living consist of worship and praise to God which is spiritual in nature (Eph. 5:19). So, the Spirit-filled life is directly linked or tied to a Spirit-filled musical life of worship. I



discover in the Bible that musical worship is the direct result of being filled with the Spirit. In other words, when we are controlled by the Spirit music will be part of our hearts and lives. If we miss this, we will miss what is being taught here.

To be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) means to be controlled by the Spirit in our mind, emotions, will, feelings, and actions – not allowing the flesh and fleshly responses to control our lives. This means that when I am filled or controlled by the Spirit my musical expression and worship will also be controlled by the Spirit and not the flesh and worldliness.

Being filled with the Spirit in our time of worship also means that I should be under the control of the Holy Spirit – not under the control of the music (the rhythms of a rock idiom) that I listen to. There is a difference of being under the control of the Spirit and under the control of rock music. You see, music can control us physically but not necessarily spiritually! When the physical takes over then we begin to miss the spiritual impact that music is to have in our hearts and lives.

I say this for God has not called us to “get high” by means of music and lose our senses and control when worshipping God, but to be controlled by the Holy Spirit in the area of our worship and music. This is an important observation on the filling of the Spirit and musical expression and worship.

We need to possess a Spirit-controlled life of worship. Our music (which includes its sound – not just the words) is not to be a reflection of those who are controlled by alcohol, drugs, and sinful rebellion against God. I think all of us need to take this to heart today. We can be sure that being Spirit-controlled (Gal. 5:23) does not result in uncontrollable physical, emotional, and mindless responses to rock rhythms that reflect worldliness and rebellion against God. The Holy Spirit should control us – not our physical responses to music. The point is this. When I am filled with the Spirit, I am also filled with musical worship expressed toward God which reveals the control of the Holy Spirit in my life!

There are three verbs used here: speaking, singing, and making melody all point to worship through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that minister or speak to our hearts. The participle and Greek word behind “speaking” was sometimes used to refer to animal sounds, and sometimes to refer to the cooing sounds of a baby. Sometimes it is used to describe the chirping of birds. Paul is saying that when we are singing (chirping away) we are in one sense speaking or communicating to one another (each other) the great truths of Scripture regarding God, redemption, salvation, and many other Scriptural themes.

Of course, speaking, singing and making melody is part of our worship. It explains the content of worship. If we lose our joyful song in worship and melody of gladness, then we are not living a Spirit-filled life. Incidentally, this verse reminds us of the importance of the melody in music which is to be the driving force of good music. The melody is described as “a sweet or agreeable succession or arrangement of sounds.” It is an agreeable pitch and rhythm of the song.

The next verb “singing” means just that – to sing with the voice (Eph. 5:19). But in the New Testament it is always used in relation to praising God with the voice (Col. 3:16). The phrase “making melody” literally means to pluck on a stringed instrument, particularly a harp, with the fingers. The word came to represent the making of any instrumental music. So, the idea behind the word “melody” means to worship God with musical instruments. We discover that the Spirit-filled heart will then express itself with vocal and instrumental music.

Those who teach that only the words matter to God cannot justify this position based upon God’s Word which reveals that instrumentation (sound) is just as important to God (2 Chron. 7:6; 150:4). When we offer up a song to God in worship,

He does not separate the words from the musical sound, and neither should we. Both must be acceptable unto Him (“spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him” - 1 Pet. 2:5). And remember this, we can make a song palatable for sinners but at the same time make it unacceptable to God.

When Paul mentions, “in your heart” (Eph. 5:19) he is talking about the location of all true worship which occurs within our inner being (“worship him in spirit and truth” - John 4:24). We are talking about internal worship which is the most important thing about worship – worshipping God from our hearts. We may not have a very good singing voice, but we can always “make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Ps. 66:1; 81:1; 95:1) and have a wonderful, worshipful, singing experience within our heart.

In essence, “to make melody in our hearts” means to worship in our hearts, allowing the words and sounds of music to ring in our hearts. There is a well-known hymn that reflects this: “There’s within my heart a melody!” We are talking about living with a song in our hearts. It’s living with the songs of the redeemed permeating our heart and life.

“There's within my heart a melody;
Jesus whispers sweet and low,
"Fear not, I am with you, peace, be still,"
in all of life's ebb and flow.”

So, the location of our worship is internal – “the hidden man of the heart” (1 Pet. 3:4). We must remember that public worship is really to be a manifestation of private worship (what is going on inside of us). It’s not to be some kind of fake display but a representation of what is really occurring in our hearts! We are singing to the Lord because we really do love the Lord.

In Amos 5:23 God says:

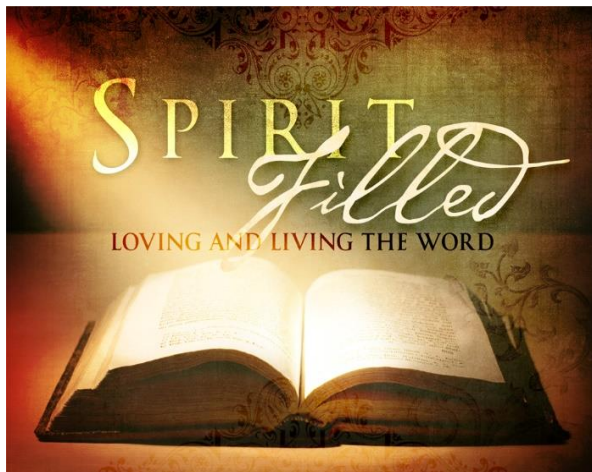
“Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols” (*musical instruments*).

Stop the music! God sometimes says this to His people. “Stop singing and stop playing your instruments for your hearts aren’t right. Stop your songs and get your

hearts right with me. I don't want your songs unless your hearts are right." God is looking for our hearts!

Colossians 3:16 gives us a similar thought as Ephesians 5:19:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (*internal worship*) in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms (*Scripture-based songs – Israel's hymnbook – the book of Psalms*) and hymns (*theological based songs about God*) and spiritual songs (*songs of testimony with spiritual themes – covering a wide area*), singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."



It's interesting that similar results are seen between the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:19) and being filled with the Word of God ("let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"). This tells us that we cannot be filled with the Spirit unless we are filled with God's Word. The Spirit used the Word to control us and change us into Christlikeness (2 Cor. 3:18). Always remember this. In order to be filled with the Spirit we cannot be filled with ourselves!

Colossians 3:16 states that we are to be "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Again, this probably has a reference to corporate worship since we are to use our singing to minister to others as we sing together about God and the truth of His Word. We receive a certain amount of teaching, reflection, and admonishment when we get together as God's people and sing together. This reminds me that we cannot be teaching or admonishing others in a church setting if we sit home on Sunday and watch TV or Internet church.

Part of our communication with one another is to encourage each other through singing the truth found in the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Teaching and admonishing one another through song is not evangelism (evangelizing the lost with our music). It is not entertainment (entertaining the lost who cannot worship God). This is unified or corporate expression of joy and gratitude to God which is shared among believers.

Here is the point. Music was never designed for religious, rhythmic entertainment, to feed our fleshly wants and desires. It was specifically created for a teaching purpose among the saints. We should not minimize music's Biblical role in our lives and ministries. Colossians 3:16 informs us that Biblical truth is essential for our everyday sanctified living and worship (John 4:24). Furthermore, this truth can be put to song and become a guide to our lives.

Once again, we see that all our worship is to be personal, internalized, and sincere. It's to occur "in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). This is exactly what Ephesians 5:19 says. To whom is our music and worship offered? The end of Ephesians 5:19 gives us the answer: "to the Lord." Ephesians 5:20 adds: "Giving thanks (part of our worship) always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A. W. Tozer states during his day:

"It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God."

We see here that our worship is directed to God and God alone. It's not to be directed toward us in any way – our feelings, wants, check list, wishes, genre or style of music. It certainly is not to be centered upon unbelievers (their depravity, worldliness, and wicked lifestyles). The focus of all our Christian music and worship is to be only centered upon God – "to the Lord." It is rendered up to God. He is the audience ("sing unto the LORD" - Ps. 9:11; 95:1; 96:2; 104:33; 147:1). We're not to entertain each other; we're not to entertain nonbelievers. Our praise is offered to God, and this is what music and worship is all about.

Tozer concludes:

"I wonder if there was ever a time when true spiritual worship was at a lower ebb. To great sections of the church, the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the 'program.' We are told to "get with the program" today but what we really need is to get worshipping God deep within our soul. The program has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the public service which now passes for worship among us."

Here is the takeaway from all of this. Spirit-filled music is Spirit-directed music which reflects God's nature and Word on every level – theologically, ethically, and

morally. If you desire a Spirit-filled or Spirit-controlled musical lifestyle, you cannot allow your physical responses and reactions to a certain type of musical sound to control you. The Holy Spirit is to control you as you worship God.

Again, don't confuse the filling of the Spirit with the filling of yourself! Don't confuse a worldly spirit with the Holy Spirit. In worship, we give back to God, we don't try and greedily get something we want from God.

Psalm 29:2

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

We don't worship to GET; we worship to GIVE; we give back to God His worth.

We need to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit as we worship God and not be *fooled* by other spirits and the flesh. We should always choose Christian music that reflects God's nature and the Spirit's controlling work in our hearts and lives and not confuse the Spirit's filling with manmade or artificial stimulants which people identify with other genres of musical expression.

People ask me, "What is your genre of music? I always tell them – "Spirit filled and spiritual music" (non-fleshly, non-worldly, non-entertaining music). We must learn what kind of music reflects God's nature and glory and use it today in our worship. This is a worship that is not man centered but God centered holy worship that reflects God's character and ways.

We are to be "singing with grace" (Col. 3:16). This likely refers to singing about the *message* of grace but also experiencing the inner *means* of God's grace working in our hearts to produce thanksgiving. Strong defines "grace" in this context as "the divine (God's) influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude." I think this is correct. It is God's grace working in our hearts that produces worship and thanksgiving (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:30; 2 Cor. 4:15).

New Testament grace (God's favor, kindness, and blessing) is sometimes viewed as an expression of the work of God in our hearts and souls. Therefore, Paul is thinking of the grace of thanksgiving being worked out in our hearts by God. In fact, "singing with grace in your heart to the Lord" (Col. 3:16) correlates with "making melody in

your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Paul seems to be linking grace with a spirit of joyfulness and thanksgiving (inner worship) which are the direct result of God moving upon our hearts. Only God can produce a singing heart that is filled with thankfulness and gratitude.

2. The basis of worship is rooted in Scripture – “the truth.”

Jesus moves from the location and characteristic of worship (“in spirit”) to the underlying basis of all true worship. It must be done in accordance with the truth. Jesus brings in the foundational element of all true worship. It must always align with the truth of God’s Word. Again, the sensual (soulish or earthly part of man) is characteristic of the unsaved way of life and is therefore inconsistent with Christianity and worship (Eph. 4:17-23; Titus 3:3). The sensual is a hindrance to our spiritual growth (1 Cor. 3:1-3), conflicts with sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3), opposes the will of God (1 Pet. 2:11; 4:1-6), and will not last (1 John 2:16). What is often considered contemporary is only temporary! So we need truth to guide us as we worship.

To worship God in truth means to worship Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. If you worship God as you conceive Him to be, apart from the truth of His Word, you are worshiping an idol, a figment of your imagination, or simply misrepresenting God in your time of worship (1 Cor. 10:31). The truth of God’s character, nature, ways, and commands as recorded in Scripture reveal to us how to worship in a manner that is pleasing to Him. Our worship is not to be based on the premise of pleasing sinners.

But you might reason: “People won’t get saved without introducing them to Christian Rock Music.” Don’t presume on the sovereignty of God. Don’t insult the sovereignty of God. God does not need the perverted sounds and rhythms of rock music to save souls. He draws people to Himself through His inner conviction and goodness (John 6:44; 12:32; Rom. 2:4) and uses the “word of truth” (Jam. 1:18) as the medium to get to the hearts of unsaved people. God is sovereign – not music! To state it succinctly, souls are NOT being saved because of CCM but in spite of it. It’s only the Gospel that brings salvation (Rom. 1:16). God does not need Christian rock music or any other method that man invents to get the attention of sinners. Souls are saved because of the Gospel message (Rom. 1:16) - not because of pagan-sounding music. Faith comes by hearing the truth – not by rock music (Rom. 10:17).

In fact, the sound of rock music breeds confusion to the wayfaring sinner who needs to repent of his old lifestyle and ways (Luke 24:47).

Music is still the big issue that continues to corrupt and carnalize the local churches through adopting a form of paganized sound and the same rock idiom that Satan has historically used to promote sex, drugs, and rebellion against God. Churches and Christians continue to believe that people won't be converted to Christ without using the same type or style of music that the unsaved listen to. My response to this type of thinking is simple. We must remember that God is "Lord of the harvest" (Matt. 9:38) and not man with his movements and methods of maligned music and pragmatism which are designed to reach the lost.

As already mentioned, some naive Christians will tell you that we need to adapt to the unsaved lifestyle of people for they cannot get saved without Christian rock music, especially if they have been involved in secular rock music. That's like saying a drug addict won't get clean without taking a lesser form of the same drug or those enslaved to pornography won't be released from porn unless they dabble with a small amount of porn. Of course, the church gurus are still saying, "God can use anything by turning it into good." Really! Can God use sex, drugs, pornography, child molestation and somehow turn these things into good and glorify Himself? The argument is nonsensical and laughable if it were not so serious.

Never forget that God is sovereign – not music! He does not need Christian rock music or any other method man invents to get the attention of people. Souls are saved because of the Gospel message (Rom. 1:16) - not because of pagan-sounding music. In fact, this sound breeds confusion to the wayfaring sinner who needs to repent of his old lifestyle and ways (Luke 24:47).

We should understand that the sinner wants his sinful lifestyle to be validated musically. Therefore, Christian Rock Music can keep the lost sinner from seeing himself as God sees him (Rom. 3:10). Christian Rock Music (CCM) makes people comfortable in their lifestyle and does not produce a large enough chasm between God and the sinner (Rom. 3:23). Christians Rock Music does not demonstrate how much an unsaved person needs a Savior from their sins (Matt. 1:21). A rock idiom does not produce the breeding ground for repentance (Acts 11:18; 2 Pet. 3:9). Only the truth sets people free (John 8:32) – not the carnally based sounds of rock music.

Truth is foundational to all experience (John 8:32). The basis of all true worship is to be done “in truth” for the truth informs us how to worship God in an honorable and reverent way that brings glory to Him. Our sincerity is one thing, but we might be sincerely wrong in the manner we are worshipping God. In fact, our concept of spirituality may be shallow, skewed, and not accurately reflect the truth. I once heard Oprah Winfrey say that she was spiritual. Anybody can tell you they are a spiritual person, even the Mormons. So, in the end, truth is the final answer to all true spirituality and worship. Our worship must side with Biblical truth or else it becomes a form of deviant and debunked worship which does not align with God’s character and ways.



Our worship must be an offering that aligns with Scriptural worship (Rom. 4:3). Many will tell you that they want to worship God in the way which makes them feel good and meets their emotional needs. But our concern in worship is not how we feel, but what God has said about worship in His Word. This means above all else that we must submit our worship to God’s words, sayings, and commands (John 14:15; 1 John 5:2). As we worship, we will worship in a manner that reflects how God is revealed in the Bible. God is true, holy, righteous, gracious, merciful, and faithful.

Both our words and musical expression should reflect this. We should worship God in a way that aligns with the Biblical principles and commands to separate from unrighteousness, darkness, and what the Devil promotes (2 Cor. 6:14-17). We should worship by not conforming ourselves to the world system (Rom. 12:2) and maintain order (1 Cor. 14:33, 40), reverence (Ps. 29:2), and Spirit-filled control in our time of worship (Gal. 5:23). We should also worship with gladness, joy, and thanksgiving (Eph. 5:19-20). We should worship in a way not to be seen of men and glorify ourselves (Matt. 6:5).

Isaiah 42:8

“I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

Our worship must be balanced with Scriptural revelation. Again, we are to worship according to God's Word and the true revelation of His spiritual nature – not according to our own fleshly wants and desires. Truth must always dominate our worship – not a secularized, perverted rock sound that was created to promote rebellion against God's spiritual order and moral laws. In this context, the word "truth" primarily means that worship is to occur in harmony with the truth that God has revealed in His Word concerning salvation through His Son Jesus Christ ("salvation is of the Jews" – John 4:22).

Note that Jesus does not gloss over the errors and paganism of Samaritan religion. Jesus bluntly states that the Samaritans worshiped what they did not know. They were spiritually ignorant and wrong ("Ye worship ye know not what" - John 4:22). Worshipping God in truth is important. We cannot know the invisible God except as He has chosen to reveal Himself, and we have that revelation in His written Word. Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh, is the supreme revelation of God to us (John 1:1, 14; Heb. 1:1–2; Luke 10:22). He is the way, the truth, and the life; no one can come to the Father, except through Him (John 14:6).

It is false to say that every religion is equally valid and that we should not judge other religions as false! Jesus would not condone the theory of religious pluralism which is being promoted today. It simply concludes that all religions are equally true and ultimately lead to God and Heaven. If Jesus would be here today, He would say as He did the Samaritan woman, "You don't know what you are doing. You don't know how to worship for you are not worshipping according to truth. I'm certain that Jesus would also conclude the same thing about the paganized form of so-called contemporary Christian worship, a rock idiom that Satan has used to bring out the sinful depravity in man, a dominant rhythmic pattern that caters to the flesh, and glorifies man and self over the true nature of God. The rock idiom does not give a repentant view of man's moral depravity. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to worship.

Of course, there is more that pertains to worship than just the message of salvation through Jesus Christ (John 4:22). The methods of worship are also important to God and must reflect the truth of Bible separation from pagan forms of worship. Jesus was alluding to this when talking about the ignorance of Samaritan worship. Worshipping according to truth would have a broader application to all truth that is related to the act of worship. This would include the truth of Biblical sanctification or separation ("the doctrine which is according to godliness" – 1 Tim. 6:3) which

does not reflect cultural worldliness or pagan ways in our worship. “Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing...” (2 Cor. 6:17). It would include a Biblical view of God’s righteous character and ways. Any worship that diverts from the Father’s revelation of Himself and Son and which takes away glory from them is a form of deviant and selfish worship.

Ric Llewellyn concludes with this:

“Convictions must be based on the Word of God and not personal tastes, likes, and dislikes. Since most of religious rock, or so-called contemporary Christian music, has its roots in, and draws its inspiration from, secular rock 'n' roll, the result is worldliness in the music, and even worse, worldliness through music invading the church. Further, it authenticates the rock sound by having professing Christians playing the music. When one applies the standards of Scripture to this form of worldliness (e.g., II Cor. 6:17; I Thes.5:21, 22; Rom. 12:2; I Jn. 2:15,16; Js.4:4; etc.), the wrongness of such music should be obvious to all who truly desire to please their Lord.”

To worship “in truth” involves Scriptural accuracy. Worship must always be consistent with the truth God has revealed about His Son and His existence, character, and holy nature (Heb. 11:6; 1 Pet. 1:16). Real worship must always be centered “in truth” and not manmade aspects of pagan worship which do not properly represent God.

John Philipps reminds us:

“Samaritanism was largely a worship of what was false and pagan in nature, rather than worship that was rooted in the truth. It was concerned with a hodgepodge of religious ideas. At best it was a sterile hybrid thing, lifeless, dead, and false.”

Here is a point of application. Worshipping “in spirit and truth” complement one another and balance each other out. To attempt to worship in spirit (in the inner heart) without truth can result in the worship of false gods and incorporating various facets of paganism into our worship. Like the Samaritans, it results in ignorant and empty worship. But to worship in truth without spirit (without allowing God to speak and truly reveal Himself to our inner being and heart) is to fall into dead orthodoxy.

The issue is not where a person worships, but how and whom they worship (God verses pagan ideas, concepts, worldliness, etc). A true concept of God is essential to right service and worship of Him (“Ye worship you know not what” - John 4:22). Some people actually worship their form of worship! They are addicted to a form or specific pagan style of worship instead of actually worshipping God.

God places a premium on the doctrine of sanctification (John 17:17; 1 Thess. 4:3) which extends to the area of pure worship. God does not accept just any kind of worship but reverent and holy worship that expresses who God is in His eternal being and nature (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 12:28).

Pastor Steven Cole again writes:

“The goal of theology should be doxology, or worship. If you worship a god who is loving, but he overlooks sin, you’re not worshipping the true God, but rather an idol you made up, because the God of the Bible is loving and holy. True worship rests on knowing God truly as revealed in His Word. Without God’s revealed truth, all the emotion in the world is misdirected and futile.”

Malachi 1:8 speaks of aberrant worship:

“And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.”

God said that the people should know better than to worship in such a way as this, but they still practiced this type of contemptible worship. They were offering the blind, crippled, and diseased animals on the altar. This kind of offering was a disgrace to a holy God. Much of what is being offered up to God today in contemporary worship is a form of blind and diseased worship. The kind of music and worship being presented to God today resembles a similar sound of rebellion and discord that Satan has used to promote sex, drugs, and other acts of rebellion. I will repeat this several times in our study. The sound which includes the big beat of rock music has a language of its own that God despises for it breeds sex and rebellion against God’s righteousness standards.



Nic Cohn is at least truthful in his analysis of rock music:

“What was new about it was its aggression, its sexuality, its sheer noise, and most of this came from the beat. This was beat, bigger and louder than any beat before it, simply because it was amplified.”

The argument that its only about the lyrics that matters to God is a straw man argument. It is an argument that attempts to avoid the history and purpose for the creation of rock music and the destructive force it has been in the lives of untold millions of people in the cultural, anti-God revolution. It is not just the *content* of the music but the *characteristics* of the music. Both are sending a message.

In Malachi 1:10 God concludes by saying:

“... I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering (*your unholy worship*) at your hand.”

Today the church is trying the same thing with its worldly, pragmatic offerings of worship, which are directed toward God. The contemporary music of a perverted rock culture is being offered to God as a form of holy and acceptable sacrifice. But God is saying the same thing He said to His people many years ago. “I don’t want your blind and unholy worship. The table of the Lord is polluted and contemptible (Mal. 1:7, 12). It is full of disgrace and disrespect. I despise such offerings.”



Leviticus 10:1

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.”

I believe that much which identifies as worship today is “strange fire” to God and is not pleasing to Him. This is because it does not properly represent who God is in His character of holiness and righteousness and therefore does not glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ROCK

Let's get specific and cut through the chase. When so-called worship songs reflect the rock idiom of accents on the offbeat, or backbeats, the excessive or heavy syncopation, this creates musical or rhythmic confusion, and when they are accompanied with excessive repetition and loudness, they lose their spiritual nature and become hypnotic and carnal in their expression. One rock band actually called themselves "The Backbeats" because they know this is the dominant feature in Rock Music. Backbeats refer to pounding out the 2nd and 4th beats in a measure which was introduced as one of the hallmarks of Rock Music. Offbeat drum rhythms appeal to the carnal/physical. In rock music, offbeat or backbeat rhythms dominate the musical piece instead of the melody. Repetitious offbeat accents, whether played by a drum or bass guitar do not support the melody but overtake the musical piece.

The universal characteristics of the sounds related to rock music are clearly defined:

- Heavy, steady, driving backbeat and syncopation (rhythmic confusion)
- Excessive loudness and screaming (dangerous decibels)
- Hard to decipher melody or no melody (agreeable sound)
- Relentless Repetition that is hypnotic (with little or no variation)
- Captivation of the soul and mind (mindless neutrality – becoming drunk on the music)
- Channel for the flesh to overtake us and evil spirits to work (demonic)
- Departure from God
- Worldliness
- Irreverence
- Strong association with the deeds of darkness
- Sensuality

This type of music is crafted to entertain the flesh. Even the style of singing can be built on commonly known sensual clichés (scooping, sliding, wailing, screaming, breathlessness, or cooing) so that the music becomes a carnal expression and not a spiritual presentation. What is the music in its lyrics, sounds, and presentation portraying? Remember that sensuality is the opposite of walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:18-25).

Tim Fisher remarked:

“We cannot, under any circumstance, do the work of the Spirit with our flesh – no matter how hard we may try or how sincere we may be.”



God has always hated a mixture (Lev. 10:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). The abuse of rhythm can cause a mixture of the physical and spiritual, or the soulish and the spiritual. It can cause the physical to overtake the spiritual, and rhythmic confusion can elicit ungodly emotions that excite the carnal elements of our human nature. This is why rock artists use specific rhythmic patterns to promote lust, rebellion, and control over a person’s body and soul.

If Satan can through what the Bible terms as “the wiles of the devil” (1 Peter 5:8) convince us that musical sound is neutral or amoral (contains no ethics or moral attached to it), then the Evil One can use music to lead us into a worldly pattern of life and keep us from glorifying God. God’s Word reminds us that we are to take control of our bodies, emotions, and never allow outside influences (including our music) to lead us astray in our times of worship and overall living (1 Cor. 9:27). Our fleshy and even emotional response to music can be misinterpreted as something spiritual when in reality it is only physical and soulish. Beware of this.

Knowing that music is a moral issue and there are lines we should not cross is important for every Christian. We cannot discern where the lines are if we don’t believe there are any lines. We must come to the place where we conclude that God is right and He and His Word is the eternal standard of right and wrong. Matters of right and wrong are rooted in God’s eternal character. Our music and worship is to reflect God’s character to glorify Him (1 Cor. 10:31) and this means right and wrong are constant and without fluctuation for they are based on God’s timeless character. Knowing God is the safest way of knowing right and wrong. Music which is out of character with God is wrong music.

Deuteronomy 32:4

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

Revelation 15:3

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.”

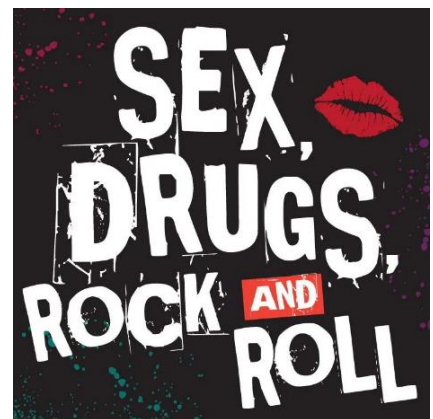
Knowing the Scriptures (Rom. 4:3) are also part of making a distinction between fleshly music which aligns with our soulish or base existence and spiritual music which promotes our walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25). The Scriptures repeatedly warn us to never conform with the world (Rom. 12:2) and mix with pagan practices (2 Cor. 6:14-17). They warn us to “Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate” (Amos 5:15).

Contemporary Christian Music artist Phil Driscoll once said:

“We’ve had the mistaken impression for too long that somehow the Creator doesn’t have rhythm. God is the King of Soul; He’s the King of all rhythm.”

Of course, this is an absurdity. Rhythm (a strong repeated pattern of movement or sound) is part of all music. It is what makes a song move. However, Driscoll’s statement is based upon the false premise of the neutrality of music (all rhythms are equal) and bypasses the truth of Bible separation from musical expression that was designed to promote sex, rebellion against God, the drug culture, and which does not reflect the glory of God’s holiness, peace, and order in His eternal existence. Adopting any rock sound in our personal lives and church ministries is a direct violation of the doctrine of Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17). It violates God’s character and ways. Music must be put to the test of God’s character. Rock music in all its forms (words, rhythm, sound) causes us in some measure to touch the unclean thing (2 Cor. 6:17) that God forbids, and which so grossly misrepresents His glory.

Reflect on this for a moment. So much of the world’s music (including its sound) is historically and directly associated with drugs, alcohol, sex, and rebellion against God. This is why it came into existence. The familiar phrase “Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll” remind us of this. The sound of rock music has a language of its own and this is where the real issue surfaces in relation to Christian rock music. We cannot live in a fool’s



paradise. Let's stop kidding ourselves. Rock music by design is fleshly in its composition, in both words and sound, the sound corresponding and communicating the same message of rebellion. This is why rock music was created. To try and change the words but keep the same sound of rebellious music (as CCM artists do) is to ignore God's clear warning to separate from that which unrighteous, unholy, dark, and devilish in design (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

There are timeless and applicable principles taken from 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 that we should apply to our music and worship.

✓ **Righteousness demands separation from worldliness – 14a**

“for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?”

Whatever is unrighteous I must cut off and separate from and not participate with it in any way.

✓ **Light demands separation from worldliness – 14b**

“what communion hath light with darkness?” (metaphors for purity and sin)

Whatever is not pure I must separate from and not condone it.

✓ **Christ demands separation from worldliness – 15a**

“And what concord (*agreement*) hath Christ with Belial”

Whatever Satan creates and promotes to cause rebellion against God, I must separate from and not participate with those practices (the occult, pagan practices, musical rebellion, etc.).

Belial (worthless and lawless one) is another name for Satan. Belial began rock music and therefore in some way we associate with him when using a rock rhythm and idiom in our worship and churches. We cannot agree with Satan's ways and what He has promoted. Therefore, musical rebellion needs to be separated from to honor God over Satan's ways. Rock music is Belial music.

✓ **Partnership demands separation from worldliness – 15b**

“or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel” (*the unbelief of unsaved people*)

Whatever I partner or mix with I promote and condone. I put my stamp of approval on it. The point is this. we are not to have any “part” with unbelief and paganism which is practiced by unbelievers. Jeremiah 10:2 says, “Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen...”

✓ **God’s temple demands separation from worldliness - 16**

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God...”

Whatever does not agree with God’s indwelling presence inside my body, I must separate from, so I can glorify God in my body (1 Cor. 6:19-20). To summarize everything that is stated above, “Touch not the unclean thing” (2 Cor. 6:17). For the reasons stated above we are commanded to “come out from among them (their sinful and compromising ways – their places, programs, and pagan ways that are not holy), and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing” (corrupt doctrine, practices, and departures from God’s holiness).

It should be noted that a group, generation, and entire culture can go astray. God wanted, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Ex. 23:2). This is certainly what occurred with rock music. We lost many generations and the culture to this satanically inspired rock idiom.

Here are the facts:

- If we incorporate the sound of musical rebellion into our time of worship then we fellowship or participate to some degree with the darkness and not the light, the unrighteousness and not the righteous, Satan’s kingdom and not God’s kingdom (2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:11; 1 Cor. 10:20). Whether intentionally or naively, we mix with cultural rebellion when attempting to worship with the sounds and styles of the rock idiom.

- The concept of Christian rock music is an oxymoron. It is a contradiction of words, a contradiction of God's ways, and a contradiction of God's holy nature. Therefore, it cannot bring glory to God.
- Music that does not reflect rock music can be listened to for enjoyment and wholesome entertainment without violating Scriptural boundaries and without the purpose of leading us in a time of spiritual worship. For instance, our children might watch a Mary Poppins movie which does not reflect rock music but does not violate the principles of Bible separation from ungodly music. Certain music may not have a spiritual impact upon us, but neither will have a corrupting influence upon our lives.



In short, God is against worship that uses the sounds of rock music which are related to sexual revolution and rebellion against His righteous ways. God does not get the glory when we try and mix two incompatible realms of existence such as light with darkness, righteousness with unrighteousness, and God's kingdom with Satan's kingdom (2 Cor. 6:14-15). When we attempt to walk on the line or

mix the diabolical rock culture with Christian words, we are creating a breach of Bible separation and misrepresenting God's holy character. In doing so, we breed disorder, confusion, and disrespect for God. When we mix the world with worship, we get mixed and skewed results.

There is a sound, apart from lyrics, which runs contrary to the character of God and is morally unfit and contrary to righteousness. Lyrics, even words directly taken from the Scriptures, when set to music which was developed by the ungodly to expose lewd themes, becomes corrupted due to its direct association with that which is morally evil and part of cultural degeneration. Therefore, the mixture of Christian themes (words) with corrupt sound designed to promote rebellion against God and His moral virtues actually creates moral confusion (2 Cor. 6:14-15). The

mixture of a perverted sound with sanctified words is incompatible. This is what the Scriptures repeatedly teach.

Leviticus 10:10 is timeless principle:

“And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.”

God hates a mixture and when Christians mix with moral corruption, they become worldly-minded and mixed-up Christians and imbibe things which are nauseating to His character (Rev. 3:16). Elements of ungodly music with elements of godly music is what is being condemned in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, Leviticus 10:10, 1 John 2:15-16, Romand 12:2 and many other Bible verses. When rock music first hit our country, it was clearly in the camp of the ungodly. Therefore, we must not mix with this culturally corrupt sound in our time of worship. We need to make a clear statement against rock music in all its forms, prove what is acceptable according to God’s Biblical standards, and refuse to participate with worship that is tainted with a culturally corrupt rock idiom.

Ephesians 5:10 -11 declares:

“Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.”

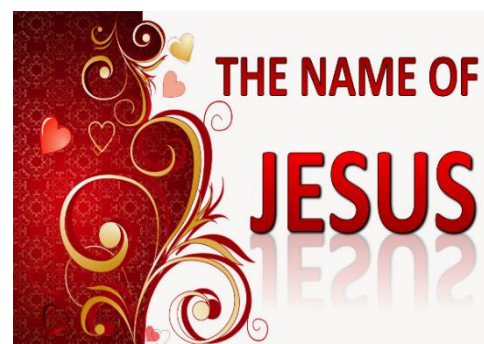
Some Christians say a little rock music in Christian music never hurt anyone. That’s like saying a little nudity, a little alcoholic drinking, a little cursing never hurt anyone.

Colossians 3:17

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

The “name of the Lord Jesus” speaks of representing who He is (His character and ways) in whatever we choose to do. The great test should be: Can I do this in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ? Would this be to His glory? Could I expect His blessing to rest on it? Would I want to be doing it when He comes back again? Notice that this test should



apply to the words we speak and to the deeds we do. This would include our worship!

Questions to answer.

- ▶ Is music morally neutral?
- ▶ Are we free to use any style/form of music?
- ▶ What is the role of culture in music?



The Bible answers the questions related to rock music. Music is not neutral, not every style of music reflects the Creator, and many times we must counteract culture in our Christian lives, so we embrace what God embraces and love what God loves (Rom. 12:2). It's interesting that secular rock artists vehemently deny the neutrality of rock music (the musical sound of the rock idiom). But Christian

rock artists embrace the neutrality of musical sound so they can mimic the same sound of secular rock music.

Listen to the secular rock artists who vehemently deny the neutrality of music. "Rock music is sex and you have to hit them [teenagers] in the face with it" (Andrew Oldham, manager of the Rolling Stones, Time, April 28, 1967, p 54). "Rock Music is Sex. The big beat matches the body's rhythms" (Frank Zappa, June 28, 1968). Rock 'n' roll is all sex. One hundred percent sex" (Debbie Harry, The Age of Communication", William Lutz, 1974, p. 398). "Rock and roll is 99% sex" (John Oates, interview in Circus, January 31, 1976). "Rock 'n' roll is sex. Real rock 'n' roll isn't based on cerebral thoughts. It's based on one's lower nature" (Paul Stanley, The Role of Rock, p. 44). "Everybody takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with sex" (Chris Stein, interview in People, May 21, 1979). Rock is the total celebration of the physical" (Ted Nugent, Rolling Stone, Aug. 25, 1977). "That's what rock is all about – sex with a 100 megaton bomb, the beat!" (Gene Simmons of the rock group Kiss, interview, Entertainment Tonight, ABC, Dec. 10, 1987).

It's clear that only CCM artists hold to the "neutrality of music" position so they can support a perverted form of Christian music. They should follow the advice of rock artists and keep it out of the church. "Listen, rock 'n' roll AIN'T CHURCH. It's nasty business. You gotta be nasty too. If you're a goody, goody, you can't sing or play it" (Lita Ford, rock singer, Los Angeles Times, August 7, 1988). Author Steve Lawhead, a defender of CCM, makes an interesting statement when he writes, "No, rock music

cannot take you anywhere you do not want to go. However, it [rock music] can make it easier for you to go where you do want to go, but know you shouldn't."

Witchdoctors and secular rock artists, and those involved in the occult will confess that rock music is created for a sexual and even Satanic response. In April 1990, a Christian from Zimbabwe, Africa, arrived for his first visit to the United States. He is a native missionary under the Awana Youth Association. When he turned on a Christian radio station and listened to the music, he was shocked. Here is his report: "I am very sensitive to the beat in music, because when I was a boy, I played the drums in our village worship rituals. The beat that I played on the drum was to get the demon spirits into the people. When I became a Christian, I rejected this kind of beat because I realized how damaging it was. When I turned on a Christian radio station in the United States, I was shocked. The same beat that I used to play to call up the evil spirits is in the music I heard on the Christian station."

David Pratt, from Chattanooga, Tennessee writes:

"My background is not a good one, but I give thanks and praise to God for saving me from it. I was a Satanist high priest for nine years... When I first became involved in the occult, music had a big influence on my life. It was not just the words but the music itself. Its effect on me spiritually was to bring me into another state of consciousness. The beat and style of the music used in the occult rituals is the same that I now hear in 'Christian power tracts,' 'Christian rock and roll,' 'Christian rap,' and in much of what is called 'Christian contemporary' music today."

No, I'm not saying that CCM and singers are the same as Satanists and Satanic bands. But think of this, why would any Christian want to represent a type of musical sound connected with the underworld of darkness and Satanism in order to promote Christian themes? This is a direct violation of Scripture. You cannot change the face of evil, that which is intrinsically evil and which was created for the world of sin, darkness, and Satan (Job 14:4).

Intellectual honesty will lead us to the conclusion that sound is not neutral. The local tavern will not play the cherished hymns of the church. Why? It's because certain music does not fit in those places. They want music that feeds the senses and fleshly desires. Witch doctors would not use Bach to accompany their demonic spells. How sad when worldly people recognize that musical sound is not neutral, but God's people are ignorantly denying the reality of this, so they can indulge in

their worldly behavior. Jesus taught: “The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8).

God’s Word reminds us that we are to take control of our bodies, emotions, and never allow outside influences (including our music) to lead us astray in our times of worship and overall living (1 Cor. 9:27). Our fleshy and even emotional response to music can be misinterpreted as something spiritual when in reality it is only physical and soulish. Beware of this.

Most Contemporary Christian Music is listened to for worldly rhythmic entertainment, personal gratification, and self-seeking purposes, instead of worshipful surrender to God’s holy will (Rom. 12:1-2). Many Christians listen to this type of music for fleshy and personal excitement, so they might experience artificial highs, physical gyrating responses, escaping from reality, and the desire to pass through certain feelings of euphoria, instead of emphasizing spiritual edification of the inner man (Eph. 3:16).

We should be very careful not to justify or sanctify a type of worship which may in various ways reflect carnality, worldliness, showmanship (entertainment) and which becomes a diversion from the true type of worship that God requires (John 4:24).

My goal in this study is not to be redundant but to reiterate and emphasize God’s spiritual laws. 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 once again reveals why worship of God cannot be combined with a perverted rock sound used by the Devil to promote sex, drugs, and rebellion in the lives of people. The text states: “what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”



The rock idiom is an incompatible relationship with righteousness, light (holiness) and Christ for it reflects unrighteousness, darkness, and Belial (the worthless one - Satan). This is why Christians should separate from the sounds of a satanic and sexual revolution against God.

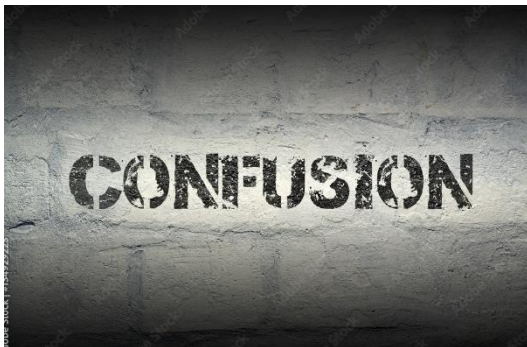
David Cloud concludes:

“To take a form of music which was created to encourage and accompany immoral behavior, a music that has literally created an immoral revolution, and to attempt to glorify God with it is a great confusion. It is to confuse the holy God of the Bible with the unholy god of this world.”

In addition, our worship should always be a “reasonable service” (Rom. 12:2) or rational worship – not a mindless worship of euphoria, confusion, and emotions run amuck.

Ernest Pickering comments on emotions and rock music:

“While our emotions are certainly involved in the worship of God they must be balanced with and controlled by the rational element of our being. The emergence of ‘rock and roll’ has produced a climate of the acceptance of music whose basic purpose is to be ‘felt.’ Many exponents of rock music have noted that it is written to be experienced rather than to be understood. Its emphasis is upon ‘feeling’ rather than upon ‘thinking.’”



1 Corinthians 14:33 declares:

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

Rock music is not only musical rebellion but musical confusion, something which God never designed. One of the key elements of rebellion in rock music is the disorderly rhythm which is the main attraction. Rock-n-Roll is a form of music which gives preference to a specific rhythm over both melody and harmony which throws off the essential balance and order God intended for all musical expression.

Everything that God does is orderly. This means God has not created a disorderly version and diversion from the original musical pattern inbred into worshipping God on the day of creation (Job 38:7). Rock music was not created by God. It was of the diabolical working of Satan who has used it to his end and ruined the lives of untold millions of people. Why would God use the same sound that has led countless people into immorality, rebellion against God, and drugs?

A.W. Tozer again states:

“People have been over stimulated to the place where their nerves are jaded and their tastes corrupted. Natural things have been rejected to make room for things artificial. The sacred has been secularized, the holy vulgarized and worship converted into a form of entertainment.”

Our tastes are cultivated, and we can develop appetites for both good and evil, the fleshly and spiritual. So our particular tastes are not a sufficient basis for deciding moral issues. There are times that our tastes must be restricted to align with the truth or God’s Word and His character which stand forever as the standards of morality.

Tozer then concludes:

“The church that can’t worship must be entertained. And men who can’t lead a church to worship must provide the entertainment. That is why we have the great evangelical heresy here today - the heresy of religious entertainment.”

We should be leery of the marriage of entertainment and worship. Much of so-called worship of today is geared around entertainment and frosted with Christian lyrics to insure the blessing of God.

John Coblenz again writes:

“The entertaining nature of these songs make them cheap – shallow performances, shadows of the real but so energetic as to fool most listeners.”

Worship is exchanged for infatuation (emotion-packed performances) and man is often worshipped more than the Creator. There is a real nauseating side to religious entrainment that is disgusting to God (Matt. 6:5; 23:5; John 12:43). Many people have their ears tickled from a musical perspective and often ask: “Isn’t that singer amazing?” And the wave of clapping assures the performer that it is so.

Tozer again writes:

“The rhythmic sway, the synthetic smile and the too, too cheerful voice betray the religious worlding. He has learned his technique from the TV screen ... He brings his inept production to the holy place and peddles it to the ailing and undersized Christians who are looking for something to amuse them while staying within the bounds of the current religious mores.”

The real threat is that much music today is promoted as worship but is only religious entertainment. As someone said, “The beat goes on” and so it is withing secularized and worldly Christianity. We must understand that the Lord does not accept all forms of worship for they can run contrary to truth about Jesus Christ, God’s holy nature, the ways God reveals Himself in Scripture, and His commands to not love the world system (1 John 2:15-17).

Think about this...

- God did not accept Adam and Eve’s covering of leaves.
- God did not accept Cain’s offering of fruits and vegetables.
- God did not accept the sacrifice of strange fire from Nadab and Abihu.
- God did not accept the sacrifice of Saul before the arrival of Samuel.
- God did not accept the way the ark was carried back to Jerusalem by King David on a cart.
- God did not accept the legalistic system of the Pharisees.
- God did not accept the gifts of Ananias and Sapphira.
- God did not accept the money offered by Simon the Sorcerer.
- God does not accept works instead of faith.
- God does not accept sprinkling instead of immersion.

All of these examples remind us that we can practice a deviant form of worship which is not in accordance with the expressed pleasure of God. They remind us that worship can misrepresent God – His character, truth, and ways. God does not accept anything and everything we throw at Him! It must be consistent with the truth of what God’s Word teaches regarding God’s person and be theologically correct. It must be clean, pure, and align with God’s righteous nature. For instance, Jeroboam set a standard of worship that was different than the expressed will of God and which did not pleasure God (1 Kings 12:25-33).

Let me update this. “What I like” and “What my preference is” is irrelevant to the issue of music in the Church and our personal times of worship. Biblical music is not based on what appeals to man but “what is acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1). This is why we must constantly be “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:10) or well pleasing to Him, which includes the kind of music we listen to and worship with. Here is something that may startle many Christians. It is possible to offer something to the Lord that is not acceptable to Him.

Again, let's reflect on the example of Cain. He offered the fruit of the ground to God, but the Lord demanded a blood sacrifice which is what Abel brought before God (Gen. 4:3-4).

Pastor David Moss writes this:

"Cain and Abel each offered a sacrifice unto the Lord. They both offered it with sincerity of their heart. But one offering was acceptable and the other offering was not acceptable. One followed the prescription of 'what I want to do for God.' The other followed the prescription of 'what God wants me to do for him.' There is a tremendous distinction between these two things. A lot of the music being used in the Church today is following the prescription of Cain. It is sincerely being offered to the Lord as something 'I want to do for God.'"

Again, we can be sincerely wrong in what we are doing, but sincerity does not change the truth of worldly, fleshly, and entertaining worship. Think about this. We can worship the wrong god (Ex. 20:3), we can worship the right God in the wrong way (Lev. 10:1), and we can worship the right God with a wrong spirit (Prov. 21:27; Matt. 7:6). Many greedily seek to get something out of their worship experience instead of understanding what God actually requires and deserves. We must also remember that worship is not necessarily acceptable to God merely because it is done in the church or in the name of Christ (Matthew 7:21). We can grossly misrepresent Christ's name. God reserves the right to reject our worship. Our music and worship should never be done selfishly, carnally, and worldly.

Jesus taught that we cannot worship God in every manner that may seem attractive to us, but we must worship Him "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24) and "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Not everything is acceptable to God, including various forms of musical worship which reflects a history of worldliness and paganism. We must be Biblically based in our worship, which includes incorporating the right type of music into our personal and corporate times of worship. God is calling us to place our music on the altar and turn everything over to Him and His ways (Isaiah 55:8).

Every believer is called to worship the God of the Word (not self) and it is God who outlines the true nature of all worship (John 4:24). God has the guiding principles of order (1 Cor. 14:40), separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17), reverence (Heb. 11:28) that we need to apply to our music and worship. God's Word has a Biblical model of worship

that we should follow (“hallowed be thy name” – Matt. 6:9). The governing moral principles, spirituality, and ethics behind worship are transdispensational.

This means the principle teaching of Bible separation is the same in both Old Testament as well as the New Testament and these transdispensational principles revolve around sacredness, holiness, and reverence in our time of worship which causes us to make a clear distinction between the holy and unholy, the clean and unclean, and the reverent and irreverent (Lev. 10:10; 23:36; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). Whenever we bring pagan concepts and culturally corrupt sounds into our worship, we become like the Samaritans to some degree, violating Christ’s instructions on worshipping God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

Virtually every religion has its music. In Exodus 32 we find the children of Israel involved in idolatry. They were worshipping a golden calf and part of the worship involved pagan sounding music for Moses referred to their music as “the noise of *them that* sing do I hear” (Ex. 32:18). He knew it was a different sound than what was normally used in the people’s worship. There is a type of music that aligns with golden calf worship.

Tim Fisher again states:

“Developing proper music taste is like any other part of our education – it takes time and effort. Some young adults have given twenty years of more of their lives learning to love rock music. Yet they are not willing to give thirty minutes a week to learn good music.”

To worship God in truth is to worship Him as He commands – in holiness and reverence (Ps. 29:2; 89:7; 1 Pet. 1:15; Heb. 12:28). Emotion without devotion to the truth is nothing more than commotion. There is a lot of commotion going on in our churches today, but many are not devoted to magnifying God’s holy character in their time of worship because they are incorporating the horrid and hellish sounds of musical rebellion in their time of worship. God is just and righteous (Ps. 145:17) but the nature of rock music is rebellion and rebellion is joined with the things of Satan “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Sam. 15:23). Rebellion is compared to witchcraft because it is evil by nature and those who practice it open themselves up to demons or satanic intrusion into their lives.

Matthew Poole concludes this section of Scripture in John 4:23-24 on worship: “God is not a corporeal being, made up of blood, and flesh, and bones, having senses as bodies have, to be pleased with sensible things; but he is a spiritual Being, the Father of spirits, and requireth a spiritual service proportioned to his being; and therefore those that pay a religious homage to him, must do it with their spirits, and according to the rule that he hath prescribed, in truth and reality.”

In summary, we are to worship the Father “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). The “true worshippers” are those who sincerely worship God from their inner hearts (the realm of their human spirit or inner being) where God communicates and reveals Himself to them – something of His eternal being, attributes, and unfathomable ways (Rom. 11:33). At the same time, when we worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24) it means our worship is spiritual in nature (non-carnal and non-pagan) and in accordance with God’s timeless truths regarding separation from darkness, unrighteousness, and Satan’s delusional schemes to corrupt God’s people (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11).

We must align our worship to God’s true revelation of Himself (His person, work, character, and ways) eliminating cultural corruption, outward displays or expressions of fleshliness and worldliness, which are foreign to the truth of God’s holiness (1 Chron. 16:20; Ps. 69:9) and apply the standard of holiness to every aspect of our lives, including our worship.

1 Peter 1:14 -16

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (*all aspects of behavior*); Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Our worship must be holy because God is holy. Our worship must reflect godliness and not the perverted ways of the world if we want to be more like God.

In John 4:24 Jesus is teaching that worship is not externalism or ritualism. Worship is never confined to buildings, rituals, candles, liturgies, etc. True worship of the Father (the kind the Father is looking for) occurs from within and is rooted in the truth of God’s Word and the Biblical revelation of God. Worshipping “in spirit and truth” results in honoring God, and is totally sincere for its without selfishness,

showiness, personal gain, and free from all hypocrisy and worldliness. It's God-centered and not man-centered.

The Father is still looking for "true worshippers." He is looking for worshippers who will worship Him in the manner He prescribes ("in spirit and truth"). When we meet with God



within our hearts and offer our hearts to God in worship, guiding our hearts and worship in the way of truth (Ps. 119:30. 105), in spiritual worship as opposed to non-fleshly, non-worldly, non-entertaining worship, it's only then that we can become the true worshippers God the Father is looking for.

Let us remember that God is seeking worshippers before workers. He doesn't just want people to serve Him, for serving people are not always worshipping people. But if a man really worships God, he will also serve Him. Worship is not showing up in church, mouthing hymns, and closing your eyes in prayer while thinking of the preparations for Sunday dinner or about the Forty-Niners football game.

In every congregation the Father is looking for Christians who mean what they are singing, praying, reciting, and who "in spirit and truth" worship Him without empty rituals performed in buildings with stained glass windows and without pagan and worldly worship adopted by the culture. Ecstatic, frenzied, and mindless worship, shallow worship, and worldly worship that does not reflect the truth of God's character and sanctification should always be avoided.

This type of worship was not shaped by Christ's model for worship in John 4:23-24. We must replace 21st century Samaritan worship with spiritual worship or those "spiritual sacrifices" which are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5), "wellpleaseing to God" (Phil. 4:18), "wellpleasing in his sight" (Heb. 13:21) and which glorify or extol who God is in His eternal being or character (Rom. 11:36)

Much of what is called praise today is man-centered and fleshly oriented. When a man or woman is shaking their hips back and forth on stage and is trying to pump people up with fleshly sound of rock music, we can conclude that these expressions or actions are no longer a spiritual sacrifice.

Kent Brandenburg comments on the pagan forms of worship:

“There are forms of worship today that are much like those pagan religious rites and practices. The music creates a chemical and emotional effect on the body that results in a sensual, ecstatic type of experience. It is also an experience so tied in to the body that it is very convincing and habit-forming. In this religious subculture there is the thought that these experiences are produced by the Holy Spirit, and have brought this person into close communion with God ... The control of the Spirit is manifested far differently. It is manifested by decency and control (Gal. 5:24).”

Rhythmic swaying back and forth, twisting, turning, and screaming was Samaritan-style worship on Mt. Gerizim. It was also similar to the false worship Diana in Ephesus. Some think worship is an ecstatic, frenzied, out-of-control experience. But this is similar to the pagan mystery religions which also had in some measure influenced and corrupted the Corinthian worship (1 Cor. 14:23) by promoting the existential, subjective feeling and gratification of the worshipper but not the glory of God. What many people call self-expression in worship is actually flesh-expression.

A sixteen-year-old from Missouri wrote: "On September 2, 1989, I went to a 'Christian rock' concert. While I was there, I danced, screamed, and sang in ways that were displeasing to God. I have many contemporary Christian music tapes, and I find when I listen to them that I get a rebellious spirit. I am so ashamed of the things that I did while under the influence of this music. I PLEAD with you to rid yourself of this bad influence."

A seventeen-year-old from Georgia also talks about rebellion and Rock Music: 'Christian rock' music has divided my youth group. It has kept me in bondage spiritually, and my relationship with my sister has been deeply hurt. I see the rebellion in both of us after we are exposed to rock. Whenever I walk into my youth group, rock is being played. I feel Satan's control start to tighten. One of my closest friends has remarked about the difference in my countenance after I have listened to this music. I find it almost impossible to have beneficial, reverent quiet times when the sensual beat pops into my mind."

A twenty-one-year-old from Michigan shared this: "'Christian rock' has hindered my life because the only difference between 'Christian rock' and secular rock is the words. The beat, rhythm, and the melody are not different; they are the same. It

does not matter whether I listen to secular or 'Christian rock,' when the songs are over, I feel the same. I feel an emptiness in my soul, a heavy burden. Even 'Christian rock' sometimes makes me feel like going out and getting rowdy or even hurting someone else if they provoke me, and that is against all of God's teachings, and everything God stands for. So get rid of all rock!!!"

A Twenty-Year-Old from Oklahoma also testifies: "When I used to listen to rock music it hindered my spirit and caused a rebellious attitude. I can tell you that when I hear 'Christian rock' music, it makes no difference what the lyrics are. It is the music that causes the rebellious spirit and attitude."

Regardless of the degree of our reaction to rock music, we should shun this type of music and separate from it based on obedience to God's Word "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Sam. 15:32).



A Christian once said to me: "Music is not important." This is a statement that lacks discernment and is an open denial of the history of rock music and its adverse effects on people throughout the years. It is musical rebellion that has pushed people into sex, drugs, and rebellion against God.

Of course, the way we worship, including our music, would NOT be important or matter ...

- If God's glory does not matter (1 Cor. 10:31);
- If separation from worldliness does not matter (Rom. 12:2);
- If sanctification and holiness does not matter (1 Pet. 1:15-16);
- If reverence, sacredness, and godly fear does not matter (Heb. 12:28);
- If pleasing God with Spirit-filled, spiritual songs, and spiritual sacrifices does not matter (Eph. 5:18-19; 1 Pet. 2:5);
- If God's creative order of music and moral purity does not matter (1 Cor. 14:33; 40)
- If our discernment does not matter (1 Thess. 5:21);
- If righteous judgment does not matter (John 7:24);
- If hating every false way does not matter (Ps. 119:104);

- If grace teaching us to deny ungodly ways and vices does not matter (Titus 2:11-14);
- If our testimony of light does not matter (Matt. 5:14);
- If God's renewal song of deliverance from worldliness and sin does not matter (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1);
- If what Jesus taught us about worship does not matter (John 4:23-24).

The truth of God's Word which teaches us how to worship must be applied to the *message* and *method* of our worship. Does our music reflect the truth about Jesus Christ, God's character, Bible separation, and represent obedience to God's known and revealed Word (1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Pet. 3:11)? If worship does not reflect who God is and misrepresents Him, then it does not glorify Him.

God declares in Isaiah 42:8:

"I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

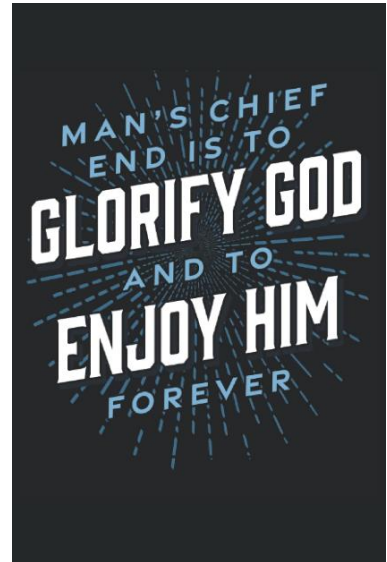
Glory can be stolen from the Lord in various ways, such as:

- ❖ When worship and music is geared to gratifying the audience through worldly lyrics and sound;
- ❖ When the musician's performance is showcased so people's attention is drawn to the performer;
- ❖ When the musician (male or female) is provocative and worldly in appearance and actions;
- ❖ When people are self-seeking, wanting electrifying experiences and personal gratification through their worship;
- ❖ When flashing lights, smoke, sound effects, and other manmade background techniques fascinate and captivate people, which in some measure overtakes and replaces worship;
- ❖ When entertainment and the praise of man is mistaken for worship;
- ❖ When mixture occurs between righteousness and unrighteousness, or light and darkness.

1 Corinthians 10:31

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do (*including worship*), do all to the glory of God."

Our worship should reflect God's character and therefore bring glory to His name. The Westminster catechism states it correctly: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Worship is about God's glory, not the fun we are having, not the feelings we are getting, or the style of our music. It's about extoling and honoring God in our time of worship which is to be a direct reflection of His holy character and ways, His attributes of faithfulness, love, justice, righteousness, and awesome purity.



Isaiah 6:3

"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

No person can ever see Isaiah's God and King and continue to be irreverent before His presence. It should be this way on earth, but it certainly will be this way in Heaven!

John Phillips declares:

"When we lose sight of God's holiness, a holiness calculated to strike awe into every heart, we lose our sense of the seriousness of sin."

In conclusion, the message, medium, and music of our worship must equally portray who God is in His infinite holiness and purity. It must be according to the truth of God's revelation and in compliance to God's commands to separate from pagan ways. "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2).

Warren Wiersbe is on record as saying:

"Those who uphold great music in Christianity are becoming museum pieces."

This is a sign of the times, but we don't have to become part of the times! We can counteract the cultural corruption of worship and musical rebellion in the church today and maintain a difference between the holy and unholy (Lev. 10:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). We can be a transformer instead of a conformer (Rom. 12:2). We can remain committed to excellence or superiority in our worship and musical expression ("approve things that are excellent" - Phil. 1:10) so we don't mimic the age of corruption but maintain a spiritual edge on the increasing compromise in the church today.

Some years ago, musicians noted that errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled out of tune as they went about their work. It was talked about and someone suggested that it was because the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes, and they were discordant. The boys did not know there was anything wrong with the peals, and quite unconsciously they had copied their pitch.

Here is the point. We tend to copy the people with whom we associate; we borrow thoughts from the books we read and the programs to which we listen, almost without knowing it. God has given us His Word which is the absolute pitch of life and living. If we learn to sing by it, we shall easily detect the false in all of the music of the world.

Our worship which often includes music musical expression should always reflect God's nature and align with the clear commands and principles of His Word.



"O be careful little ears what you hear
O be careful little ears what you hear
There's a Father up above
And He's looking down in love
So, be careful little ears what you hear."