

# Biblical Answers to "the Music" Question

Issues surrounding musical instruments in the worship service are not new. Since the 1860's, every generation within churches of Christ has had to tackle the question. One hundred years ago the church found itself in the midst of bitter division over the issue. After the Christian church went its own way in 1906, it could be argued that those within the Lord's church stood strongly united in holding up the truth on musical instruments in worship. As we stand at the dawn of the 21st century, this is no longer the case. This month's *Christian Chronicle* suggests there could be a trend among some congregations to bring in the instrument in an effort to "grow" churches. Perhaps the most prominent church to do so is Max Lucado's *Oak Hills Church* (which just dropped the "church of Christ" off it's name on Sept. 6). Other congregations include the Northwest congregation in Seattle; Amarillo South in Texas; and two congregations in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Spokesmen say the change is driven by "relevance to our community. Reaching out to seekers." They claim to be reaching "people with religious backgrounds, but who haven't gone (to church) for some time. They were worn out with the same old thing."

Yes, it is understood that the congregations mentioned above long ago left the faith. (Lucado's has taught for years that baptism is not necessary for salvation, and that there are *saved in all the churches*.) And, it is understood that these congregations would be on the far left in the religious spectrum when it comes to the authority of the Scriptures. Conservative congregations need to be aware of what is happening and make a strong commitment to teach on these issues lest the generations to follow be tempted to pursue a similar course. What is going on in *mainstream* congregations is a result of a de-emphasis on clear biblical teaching on the matter. For example, in its editorial this month, the *Christian Chronicle* seems to hold up a *Cappella* singing in worship as nothing more than a "rich tradition." This line of thinking has its roots in sectarianism and is not biblical. How we worship God is seen clearly in Scripture—and the practice of it constitutes true worship. (John 4:23-24) Dave Miller in his book, *Piloting the Strait* has written, "May God help us to find contentment and satisfaction in simple, unpretentious New Testament worship. May we rediscover the heartfelt fulfillment and genuine excitement that can only come from simple submission to the words of our great God and Father." (p. 217)

What of some of the arguments made in favor of instrumental music in worship? Peter wrote: *Be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, ...with gentleness and reverence.* (1 Peter 3:15) Here are some biblical answers to questions that may be raised on the subject of instrumental music:

**The bible doesn't say you can't use instrumental music. So,...it must be OK.** Answer: We must respect the silence of God. There is a principle in the old testament we need to learn. God told the Israelites not to *add to the word which I commanded you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.* (Deut. 4:2) This principle is repeated in the New Testament in Rev. 22:18-19. In his writing, Wayne Wells suggests using the same reasoning advocates of instrumental music in worship do by saying, *the Bible never said you could use a piano, either.*

**It's only an aid to worship.** Answer: Instrumental music is different in kind. It is not an aid, but an addition.

**A piano is just as expedient as the song books you sing from.** Answer: A thing must be lawful before it can be an expedient. Where is the passage that authorizes instrumental music in the worship of the church to make it lawful? 1 Cor. 6:12 says, *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*

**You have instruments in your home, why not in the church?** Answer: Just because something is done in the home does not make it suitable for worship of God in the assembly. Most people bathe, eat, sleep, and watch television in their homes. Shall we do these things in the worship

service?

**If the band/choir/entertainment is good enough, it draws a crowd.** Jesus condemned those who sought Him for the wrong reasons. The end does not justify the means. Jesus said, *BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.* (Mt. 15:9)

**I like & enjoy instrumental music.** Answer: Who is the object of our worship? God! Should we not be more concerned with pleasing God? (John 4:23-24)

**Playing an instrument is praising God with the talents He has given us.** Answer: Some have talents for cooking. Shall we add the best dishes of food to the Lord's supper so someone's talents can be displayed?

**Instrumental music was used in the Old Testament.** Answer: While instrumental music was used in worship, so was Sabbath (Saturday) worship; incense, feast days, and priests. If we are to keep the Old law, then we must keep it all. The OT is no longer our law for service to God. (Jer. 31:31-34; Col. 2:14-16; Heb. 8:6-13)

There is little doubt that a survey of the younger generations in churches of Christ would reveal that they do not consider the instrument in church worship to be objectionable. Let us make sure this is not the case here. May we as New Testament Christians understand the importance of this issue. It will continue to confront us in the coming years. We must firmly resolve to resist the temptation to "tinker" with the worship service in an effort to become more "relevant" to people who have not God. Let us exercise our faith and not "go beyond what is written." (1 Cor. 4:6)

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