

The Christian And His Music!

Michael Jeshurun



On a Forum some time ago a Sister in Christ asked me as to what constitutes true worship. She wrote - "I know that many only worship with Psalms, but the scriptures say "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs - making worship in your heart to the Lord." My husband and I usually worship the Lord with some of Gadsby's Hymns, though I am unable to sing. It would be interesting to see what others believe is True Worship.

Pasted below is the answer the Lord led me to write -

Dear Sister,

The question which you have raised is indeed an important one for the Christian. If you had asked me this question in your living room over a cup of tea, my answer would have been plain and simple and straight to the point. This is because you are already for the most part established on what God's will is for the Christian with regards to music. I praise God for that.

But since you have raised this question on a 'Forum' the answer cannot be given in a word, for there are many who visit a forum who have no idea what Christian music is and whether God is concerned as to the kind of music we listen to and sing in His honour.

So please bear with me if I go a little bit into detail and mention things in this post that may not even be relevant to you. But trust me, it will be relevant to many and be a blessing to many more.

First we must begin by correcting a few false notions which exist in the mind of many Christians regarding music. One of them is that "All the music is neutral only the words matter." In fact the entire 'Contemporary Christian

Music' (CCM) is built on this one massively deceptive pillar!

The other lie that is prevalent among many so called Christians today is that—"the Bible gives no instructions on the type of music for a Christian to listen to. It's all a matter of preference and culture."

As we shall see, this is not true. Let their be no doubt. . .

Music is not neutral. Has never been neutral. Nor ever will be neutral!

Do you remember that when king Saul was troubled by an evil spirit, they did not go around looking for a doctor or a soothsayer but a musician! And the scripture records - "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him". [1sam 16:23] Saul's men knew the power of music. They knew music had inherent powers! They knew music wasn't neutral!

Ask any composer who is asked to compose music for a play or a movie. The music is not the same for a happy scene as it is for a sad one. Because music has an effect on both the mind, (emotions) and the body.

One more fact to bear in mind while discussing Christian music is that the purpose of Christian music was NEVER meant to evangelize the lost! Many contemporary 'Christian' musicians and compromised 'Churches' which allow Christian Rock and Christian Rap music in their assemblies justify it by saying that they are doing it to 'reach the lost' who come to their services.

God's only method of reaching the lost is the preaching of the Word of God. Not aping the world and using their music! 'For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"! [1Cor 1:21]

How to discern music?

Many sincere Christians when it comes to music usually ask -"What about such and such a group or such and such a singer, can we listen to him or use their songs to worship the Lord"?

The best way to answer that question is to give them guidelines as to what godly music is in the first place and let them make the judgment. As the scripture admonishes - "test all things, and hold fast to that which is good"! [1Thes 5;21] Does the Bible give us any indication to the type of music we should sing? Did the Lord God who made heaven and earth, who created music and sound, who put so much emphasis on music in His Word forget to tell us what is Christian music?

Not hardly. Thank God — He has given us instructions for our music.

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making MELODY in your heart to the Lord”. [Ephesians 5:18-19]

Let us start with a word of reproof to those who use Rock or Rap music to ‘worship’ the Lord.

We need to understand that Music is composed of three main components; melody, harmony and rhythm. If these ingredients are not present, then it’s not music, but noise. Though there is a lot of harmony and some rhythm in Rock and Rap music, there is hardly any melody. Because of that, rock is unlike any other music. In other music, the melody is the main component, but in rock - the rhythm or the beat literally takes over the music.

“Perhaps the most important defining quality of rock and roll is the BEAT, . . . Rock and roll is different from other music primarily because of the BEAT.” (Charles Brown, The Art of Rock and Roll, p. 42)

And it is that BEAT that the FLESH loves!

When secular rock-star, Michael Jackson was asked why he did the filthily-sexual, hand gestures on stage, he replied:

“It’s the music that COMPELS me to do it. You don’t think about it, it just happens. I’M A SLAVE TO THE RHYTHM.” (The Evening Star, February 11, 1993, p. A10)

So ask yourself, can one use Rock or Rap music to worship the Lord?

Here is a quote from Rock star David Bowie (sodomite) - “Rock has always been THE DEVILS MUSIC I believe rock and roll is dangerous I feel we are only heralding something EVEN DARKER THAN OURSELVES.” (Rolling Stone, Feb. 12, 1976)

Some country Gospel songs were written and sung in the right spirit. But sadly not all. Much discernment is needed in determining whether a particular country gospel is Christian.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN WORSHIP

There are those who would forbid all musical instruments in worship. But I would have to disagree. Because the Scripture does not forbid it!

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.etc Psalms 150:3-5

With all the many references to musical instruments, there is one instrument that is NEVER mentioned! The DRUM! Why is that? The drum was a very common instrument in Egypt and the lands around Israel. And yet the DRUM is NEVER mentioned in a King James Bible.

Did the Lord just forget to include the DRUM or is there another reason?

Is it because — drums are associated with voodoo, shamanism, paganism and magic rituals?

"[Drums] represents the beat of the heart and is played to summon up magic powers." (Miranda Bruce-Mitford, *The Illustrated Book of Signs & Symbols*, DK Publishing, 1996 p.80)

"The shaman was the original 'long hair', the first rock star draped in leather, dancing POSSESSED to a rhythm banged out on A DRUM." (Danny Sugerman, *Appetite for Destruction*, p. 208)

In Siberia, in northern Asia, drums are used in shamanic rituals to heal people. It is believed that the shaman can communicate with the spirit world THROUGH DRUMMING. (Louise Tythacott, *Musical Instruments*, Thomas Learning, 1995, p. 37)

"Pagan dances and rituals are always accompanied by the incessant BEAT of DRUMS. Rhythm plays a major role in these demonic activities." (Hart, Lowell *Satan's Music Exposed*, Salem Kirban Inc., 1980 p.71)

The DRUM has always been associated with the paganism and the devil. In fact, a little more than a hundred years ago, drums were forbidden (except for the military) in America!

"The arrival of African slaves has had one of the strongest influences on North American music. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, millions of African people were taken as slaves to the U.S. to work on plantations in the South. They brought many of their own traditions with them but were forbidden to play their DRUMS." (Louise Tythacott, *Musical Instruments*, Thomas Learning, 1995, p.19)

Do you know why New Orleans is the voodoo capital of the U.S, and also the birthplace of jazz? Because drumming was forbidden in the U.S. - except in New Orleans!

When the first blacks from Africa were converted to Christianity they knew the power and evil influence of DRUMS. And the converted blacks strictly forbid the use of drums! They referred to the drums as "the Devil's drum". (Martha Bayles, *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*, p. 138)

One simple guideline for Christian music is NO DRUMS!

CHRISTIAN MUSIC SHOULD FEED THE SPIRIT — NOT THE FLESH!

CHRISTIAN MUSIC SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE MELODY — NOT THE BEAT!

So much then for a general statement on music, and now to particularize:

CHRISTIAN MUSIC SHOULD PRAISE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST — NOT MAN

Now, you would think this point is unnecessary for CHRISTian music. After all, CHRISTian means “a follower, believer of Jesus Christ”. And if it is truly Christian music, it should testify, praise and sing about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The PURPOSE of Christian music is to PRAISE the Lord.

“I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to THY NAME, O thou most High” [Psalm 9:2]

“Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we SING and praise THY POWER” [Psalm 21:13]

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my SONG will I praise HIM” [Psalm 28:7]

“Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise” [Psalm 33:2-3]

When someone truly gets saved, God puts a NEW song in their mouth. And that song is “PRAISE unto our God” — the result of salvation is — praise unto our GOD! And it’s not something we work up, or “fake”, or just do — but it’s something God “puts”! Christian music is “praise unto our GOD”.

“He hath PUT a NEW SONG in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD” [Praise 40:1-3]

Sadly, much of what goes by the name CHRISTian Music today is NOT CHRISTian. It does NOT testify, praise or sing about the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, a great deal of it does not even mention the Lord Jesus Christ. Much of today’s Christian Music goes out it’s way to avoid the name of Jesus Christ - or any Christian content whatsoever.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC IS FOR THE LORD — NOT THE WORLD.

A Christian's music is sung to the Lord. It is not for the world.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart TO THE LORD" [Ephesians 5:19]

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts TO THE LORD. Colossians 3:16

Sing praises TO THE LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. Psalm 9:11

Isaiah 12:2 sums it up wonderfully, ". . .for the LORD JEHOVAH is . . . MY SONG . . .":

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and MY SONG; he also is become my salvation." [Isaiah 12:2]

The ONLY way Christian Music can appeal to the world is make it UN-Christian — which is exactly what CCM does. Most CCM artists "remove" or "redefine" the Lord Jesus Christ. They replace the Lord Jesus Christ with the pronouns; "he", "him", "you", "I", et. al. They also "redefine" the Lord Jesus Christ as a "politically-correct" "tolerant", "lovey-dovey", non-judgemental, "partying", "hip-hop", "rapping-rocker" that appeals to the world. Songs such as, dc Talk's "Jesus Freak", Messiah Prophet Band's, "Master of the Metal", et al. clearly describe "another Jesus" than the Jesus Christ of the Bible. In 2 Cor. 11:4, the apostle Paul warns of "another Jesus".

Just as the lost world is not interested in a "Bible-believing" church that preaches the word of God, the world is not interested in music that openly praises the Lord. The lost world is NOT going to praise the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is CLEAR — "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"!

After Babylon captured the children of Israel, Babylon requested Israel to sing, but Israel refused to sing "the Lord's song in a strange land". Notice, it is "the Lord's song" — NOT the world's song or even Israel's song.

"How shall we sing the LORD'S SONG in a strange land?" [Psalms 137:1-4]

CHRISTIAN MUSIC IS A NEW SONG — NOT AN OLD SONG

Just before I got saved, I loved rock 'n' roll. Nothing - but nothing, was more important to me than rock music!. I played rock guitar - day and night! I did not have a dream or goal besides rock music. And when I got saved in November 1986, at 19 years old, I had NO intention to stop listening and

playing rock music. But something changed. . .

I didn't know it then — but “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become NEW” and that included my music!

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become NEW.” [2 Corinthians 5:17]

I didn't change intentionally — but within a few months, the ONLY music I wanted to listen to and play was real Christian Music. Music that praised my Lord and Savior! My desire and love for rock music was replaced by a NEW SONG — even PRAISE unto our God!

Fanny Crosby is the greatest hymn writer that ever lived, writing over 9,000 songs! Before Fanny got saved, at 45 years old, she wrote many secular songs. But after she got saved — things were different. . . Here's what Fanny said about mixing Christian and worldly music:

“Sometimes I need to reject the music proposed for my songs because the musicians misunderstand that the Fanny Crosby who once wrote for the people in the saloons has merely changed the lyrics. Oh my no. The church must never sing it's songs to the melodies of the world.” (Danny Castle, video “What's Wrong with Christian Rock”)

And do you know why Fanny Crosby said that — because Fanny got saved! And God “hath put a NEW SONG in my mouth, even PRAISE unto our God” inside the NEW Fanny Crosby! Fanny Crosby wrote over 9,000 songs to the Lord! Fanny used over 200 different pen names because she wanted to make sure God got the glory and not her.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC'S MESSAGE SHOULD BE CLEAR — NOT VAGUE OR DECEPTIVE

The Bible says in 1 Cor 14:15:

“I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the UNDERSTANDING also” [1 Cor. 14:15]

The message in Christian music should be clear, not vague, or unclear. Christian music should praise the Lord and — the listener should clearly understand the message.

The apostle Paul didn't try to “trick” anybody, he wanted to make sure he was understood:

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great PLAINNESS of speech” [2 Cor. 3:12]

“And my speech and my preaching was NOT with ENTICING words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” [1 Cor. 2:4]

Paul warns against “enticing words”, such as CCM does:

“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with ENTICING words” [Colossians 2:4]

Martin Luther, the German Reformer, also avoided any worldly influence and wanted the message clear:

“But I would like to avoid any new words or the language used at court. In order to be understood by the people, only the simplest and the most common words should be used for singing; at the same time, however, they should be pure and apt; and further, the sense should be CLEAR and as close as possible to the psalm.” (Martin Luther, “To George Spalatin,” Letters II, p. 69)

Look how clear these songs praise the Lord. And literally thousands of examples could be given:

“Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine” by Fanny Crosby

“My Jesus I Love Thee” by Adoniram Gordon

“Wonderful, Wonderful Jesus” by Anna Russell

“Victory in Jesus” by E.M. Bartlett

“Jesus Is All the World to Me” by Will Thompson

“Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know” by Lela Long

CHRISTIAN MUSIC SHOULD EMPHASIS THE MESSAGE — NOT THE MUSIC, NOR THE MUSICIAN

Christian music should give ALL the attention and praise to the Lord — and NONE to the music, or the musician, or the singer. The Lord should get ALL the praise, ALL the glory, and ALL the honor. Spiritually speaking, the Christian musician should be heard but not seen — the Christian musician should be hidden in Christ.

“Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.” [Psalm 66:2]

Christian musicians today are so caught up with their “music” and just the “right-sound” that the message takes a backseat. A lot of Christian music (especially with the “canned” accompaniment tapes) is a “performance” rather than a message. When that happens, the “performance” completely destroys the message by pointing all the attention to self or the music. Consequently, the musician “robs” the Lord of any praise and from a Christian perspective, it’s fruitless.

Sadly, many musicians (and not just limited to CCM) are like the chief rulers that the Lord Jesus addressed in John 12:

“For they loved the PRAISE OF MEN more than the praise of God.” [John 12:43]

Much of Christian music today is more entertainment than ministry. A lot of Christian musicians (and not limited to CCM or Christian Rock) are far more interested in impressing their audience and “flaunting” their musical talent than ministering to the Lord. You can not sing to “please men” and sing unto the Lord. It’s one or the other.

“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should NOT be the servant of Christ.” [Galatians 1:10]

Christian music is not entertainment. Christian music is spiritual “food”. Real Christian music admonishes [reprove mildly], while praising the Lord.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and ADMONISHING one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your HEARTS to the Lord.” [Colossians 3:16]

Christian music is from the heart, not just the voice. Beautiful voices are a “dime a dozen”. But beautiful hearts are “more priceless than gold”. I can’t remember the times I’ve watched a Christian musician, flaunt, pomp, articulate, get every note and vibrato perfect — and yet God was nowhere around. And yet, I’ve seen several times, when the singer may not hit the right notes — and yet God was all over them — and it showed!

A church we once attended had a man, named “J.C.” Brown. “J.C.”, by the world’s standards “wasn’t all there” — but “J.C.” and the Lord “was all there”. When “J.C.” would sing, he didn’t know all the words, he wasn’t musically “in tune” — but he was spiritually “in tune” with the Lord. And when “J.C.” sang, hearts were moved, tears would flow and you knew God was there. Why? “J.C.” was “in tune” with the Lord.

Christian music is not entertainment, not a talent show, not a performance or a concert — but a SERIOUS ministry to the Lord.

Augustine once stated:

“When I am moved by the voice of him that sings more than the words sung, I confess to have sinned”. (Oliver Strunk, Source Reading in Music History, Vol. I, p. 74)

CHRISTIAN MUSIC IS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH — NOT CONCERT HALLS, NIGHT CLUBS.

God’s place of worship and fellowship is the local church.

“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the CONGREGATION of saints.” [Psalm 149:1]

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the CONGREGATION will I praise thee.” [Psalm 22:22]

“Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the CHURCH will I sing praise unto thee.” [Hebrew 2:12]

While I realize there are exceptions, the primary place for Christian music, (excluding tapes, CD's and other recordings) is the church. CCM'ers justify their performing in worldly concert halls, auditoriums, et. al. as “trying to reach the lost”. Of course, at the same time they charge \$15 - \$20, rarely mention Jesus Christ and never, never, never — mention hell, judgement, sin or enough “salvation doctrine” to get anyone saved!.

CHRISTIAN MUSIC SHOULD FEED THE SPIRIT — NOT THE FLESH

The Christian life is a spiritual life.

A Christian is born-again of the Spirit.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” [John 3:6-7]

A Christian is to walk in the Spirit:

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” [Galatians 5:16]

God is a Spirit — and you “MUST worship him in spirit”.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him MUST worship him in spirit and in truth.” [John 4:24]

And a Christian's music should be spiritual — not carnal.

“I will sing with the SPIRIT, and I will sing with the understanding also.” [1 Cor 14:15]

ROCK MUSIC AND CCM IS FLESHLY MUSIC!

LASTLY AND MOST IMPORTANTLY CHRISTIAN MUSIC SHOULD BE RICH IN THE

WORD AND DOCTRINE.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the lord. Colossians 3:16

This is one reason why many older saints stick to the Psalms in their singing. Because when you are singing the Psalms you cannot be singing anything else other than the Word.

But even the other hymns and spiritual songs which we sing should be judged by how rich in the word and scriptural they are and how doctrinally right they are. Not all the hymns in the Hymn book (whether Baptist or Presbyterian) were written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Some of them are obviously erroneous and while others are not easily discernable to the simple. So it behooves the Christian to examine every hymn and spiritual song in the light of God's word before he lifts his voice to sing them.

Let me close with a good rule of the thumb for determining if the Christian music we use is biblical:

- (1) Can I hum the tune after hearing it?
- (2) Can I understand the words?
- (3) Do the words conform to sound biblical doctrine and truth?
- (4) Do the words, and the tune, honor the Lord rather than pander to the flesh and the physical?
- (5) Does the song emphasize grace, salvation, eternity, etc.? (6) Does it simply sound like a "love song" that has a romantic tinge to it, rather than proper spiritual love?
- (7) Is the song loud and blaring in order to bring on an emotional response?
- (8) Is it a mantra with empty repetition (Praise God, praise God, praise God, praise God)?
- (9) Can both old and young understand the song and be equally touched by it?

I trust the above was of some help in discerning what constitutes TRUE WORSHIP.

Love

Michael Jeshurun

[Much of the above is taken from Jeff Godwin's 'Bible Guidelines for Christian

Music']

SEE ALSO:

ComingInTheClouds Christian Music Resources

Lyrical heresies: What's wrong with modern worship songs

Modern Man-Centered Christian Music
