

Intro:

What is Christian music for? What place does it play in the ministry of the church?

The answers you receive for these questions varies widely depending on the philosophy of music that one holds. Is Christian music primarily a tool for evangelism? (Should it be a tool for evangelism at all?) Is it primarily focused on edification and praise? Is it primarily about worshipping God?

Can the current fads in music actually accomplish all of these purposes? How should they go about it? What is the biblical rationale for our use and purposes in Christian music?

The purpose of this message is to outline a biblical philosophy for the use of music by Christians for Christian purposes.

Our central text is Col 3.16

Proposition: God intends for Christian music to enhance, quicken, and intensify the ministry of His Word.

I. The centrality of the Word to all Christian ministry

A. 1 Cor 1.17-25

B. 2 Tim 4.1-5

C. 1 Tim 3.16-17

II. The connection of the ministry of the Word to the Christian ministry of music

A. Col 3.16

B. Eph 5.15-19

“Indeed, the crisis is that ecclesiastical authorities, while recognizing that music is important to congregational life, usually fail to see that its biblical role puts it squarely within the ministry of the Word as a partner to preaching.”¹

“I speak as a musician: Pastors trust musicians far too much and make disciples of them far too little. The theology-free musician will usually make theological decisions that run afoul of the preacher’s work. Don’t trust the musicians, teach them! The musicians may be the most strategic disciples the pastor has.”²

¹ Leonard R. Payton “Congregational Singing And The Ministry Of The Word” *Reformation and Revival* Volume 7, 121

² Payton 124-125

Payton calls music ‘the catechesis [teacher] of the heart’³

“Unless the parishioner is continuously singing what the preacher is continuously preaching, the preacher’s words will be of little effect. It is every preacher’s nightmare that a parishioner beams during the sermon, nods with assent, says, ‘Great sermon, Pastor!’ and goes on about business with no change of belief structure or ethics. The problem is, they may hear good, biblical preaching, but the Word of Christ doesn’t dwell richly within them because that is not the function accorded to preaching. Preaching is proclamatory, and we fervently beg the Holy Spirit to ‘prick the hearts’ of the hearers so that the gospel may take effect. Rightly, therefore, did Calvin incorporate a prayer for illumination in the liturgy immediately before the sermon. But illumination implies that some object will glow, and if the word of Christ does not dwell in us richly, there is precious little to light up in the first place. Great preaching is like an automobile and great congregational singing like the key. Without the key, the automobile is no better than a plastic pink flamingo on the front lawn.”⁴

“We use music for emotional engineering, not for teaching and admonition as the Bible commands. Then when the preacher looks out over a spiritually desiccated congregation, he feels compelled to profusely explain, to cajole, to sell the gospel, in short, to produce a crop in unprepared ground by his own efforts.”⁵

III. The commands of God regarding the ministry of the Word through music

A. Dt 31.19, 22, 30 (result: Dt 32)

B. 1 Chr 15.16-29

C. 1 Chr 16.4-6, 7 (result: 16.8-36)

D. 1 Chr 25.1-8 key word: prophesied (1, 2, 3, 5 - ‘seer’)

“We know that Solomon composed 1,005 psalms, most of which are lost (1 Kings 4:32). Nevertheless, this demonstrates that the writing of psalms was probably a flourishing activity at the time. Beyond this biographical detail, we know that Solomon ‘was wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite [and] Heman’ (1 Kings 4:31). If Solomon hadn’t been in the land, two musicians would have been the wisest men. In short, musicians were teachers of the highest order.”⁶

³ Payton 125

⁴ Payton 125

⁵ Payton 125-126

⁶ Payton 129-130

E. 2 Chr 20

1. Danger 1-4
2. Prayer 5-13
3. Prophet: word of God 14-17
4. Singing of faith and victory 18-25
 - a. Praised the Lord for His word (19)
 - 1) Trusted in the Lord's word (20)
 - 2) Demonstrated faith in the Word by singing the Word (21-22)

“Give thanks to the Lord for his lovingkindness is everlasting”

“Later in this Psalm [103], it becomes clear that these blessings are given to those who fear the Lord. Taken together, we have a song of gratitude to God that teaches us about God's provision and further admonishes us to fear the Lord. This is the nature of true biblical worship music. The glorification of God and the edification of the saints occur concurrently. Please notice here that worship music functions as an integral part of the teaching ministry. Pulpit preaching has greater power to explain the text logically, but music has greater power to inculcate the text, to take that text into other parts of the hearer's being.”⁷

Conclusion:

Proposition: God intends for Christian music to enhance, quicken, and intensify the ministry of His Word.

Enhance: to increase, to make better or more attractive

Quicken: to make alive

Intensify: to make more intense, stronger, or more marked

Christian music should be Word-centered and Word-enhancing — there is a Spiritual Ministry of Music.

⁷ Payton 128