

# Church Music Standards and Training Course

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We are to “prove all things” (1 Th. 5:21), and certainly one of the “all things” is music, one of the most important influences in home, church, and society.

If ever there were an age when God’s people need to take particular heed to the issue of music, it is today! This could be called “the age of music” because technology has made it ubiquitous. Most people are immersed in music every day of their lives. This is a brand new thing in human history. There was no music on demand from Eden until the 20th century, except for kings and the most wealthy who could afford to have musicians on their payroll, and even their choices were severely limited. The music revolution began with the phonograph (record player). It was invented in 1877 by Thomas Edison and he rightly predicted, “The phonograph will undoubtedly be liberally devoted to music.” Twenty years later he observed that “people are willing to pay to be amused more than anything else.” How right he was! Modern communications technology has made this the age of amusement, and music is at the very heart of the amused culture. By the turn of the 20th century, record companies were popularizing music recordings. In 1920, “Crazy Blues” by Mamie Smith sold one million copies. The explosion of commercial radio in the 1920s hastened the popularity of music listening and increased record sales. Music pieces began to be written to fit the time available on a record. The result was the three-minute pop song. It was the first time in history that an individual could listen to whatever music he pleased, and the first time that an individual could immerse himself in music in isolation. It was the dawn of the age of “me.” RCA’s 45 rpm vinyl record of 1949 was another major step in the music revolution. The 45 rpm players were small and more portable than anything that had previously existed, and some featured tall spindles that would automatically play stacks of records. It was the inexpensive, portable 45 that propelled the rock & roll revolution of the 1950s. It was the record of the rock party, the record shop, and the ubiquitous jukebox. In 1955, Bill Haley’s “Rock Around the Clock” sold 3 million copies. When I began my personal venture into the world of rock in about 1962, the 45 was still a prominent technology of the pop culture. The popularity of 45 rpm records peaked in 1977 with 200 million sales. Beginning in the 1950s, television furthered the music listening craze, particularly of pop music, with shows such as *American Bandstand*. The handheld, battery-powered transistor radio of the 1950s took portability of music to a new level. The Sony Walkman of 1979, that played the compact cassette tape, was revolutionary in making “my music” available 24/7, even while walking, running, etc. The iPod digital music player (2001) and then the iPhone (2007), with its constant connection with the Internet, took this to an even higher level. The iPhone plugged the listener into the vast world of streaming services and on demand music such as Spotify, iTunes, and Amazon. The technology-empowered music revolution is the heart and soul of the global pop culture with its licentious “me first” philosophy.

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

The churches need to train the people in music so well that they can test it by biblical standards. They must be able to discern such things as soft rock, honky tonk, dance rhythms, chords as used in CCM, and worldly vocal styles.

It is not enough to publish a list of unacceptable music. Such lists are helpful, but any list will be obsolete in a short time. Further, no list is exhaustive.

The following principles from Scripture on the music issue are for the ongoing education of the entire church:

1. Man was created with the ability to sing, and the chief purpose for this is the worship of God.
2. The Bible is filled with references to music.
3. The largest book of the Bible is a hymnbook.
4. There was singing in the Old Testament Temple.
5. Christ's kingdom will be a singing kingdom.
6. Christ's church is to be a singing church.
7. Church music must be sung and played by Spirit-filled saints who are in-dwelt with God's Word.
8. Church music is for singing to one another and unto the Lord.
9. Church music must be sound in doctrine (Col. 3:16).
10. Church music must emphasize "melody" (Eph. 5:19).
11. Church music must be sung from the heart.
12. Music is not "neutral"; it is a language and the message of the music must match the message of the lyrics.
13. Church music must be holy and separate from the world (Ro. 12:2; Eph. 4:17-19; 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pe. 2:11; 1 Jo. 2:15-16). "
14. Church music must edify.
15. Church music should be joyful.
16. Church music must not borrow from and build bridges to the world of contemporary Christian music (Ro. 16:17-18; 1 Co. 10:21; 15:33; 2 Co. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 Ti. 3:5; Re. 18:4).
17. Church music must not be designed to produce a charismatic style mystical experience (1 Peter 5:8).
18. Church music must be skillful (1 Ch. 15:21, 22; Ps. 33:3).
19. Church music must be unquestionably right and safe.
20. Church music must guard against incrementalism (1 Co. 5:6; Ga. 5:9).
21. Church must aim for that which is excellent (Php. 1:10).
22. Pastors must oversee the church's music.
23. God's people should aim to learn to sing and play music.

### **1. Man was created with the ability to sing, and the chief purpose for this is the worship of God.**

Man sings because he is made in God's image. God gave man the equipment for singing (physical, intellectual, emotional). Consider the physical. The four main parts of voice production are as follows: **The power source**, which is the air exhaled from the lungs. **The vibrator**, which is the larynx (voice box) that sits on top of the windpipe or trachea. It is an incredibly complex organ

consisting of two folds (known also as vocal cords) that vibrate when air passes over them when activated by the individual. (When we aren't speaking or singing, the air passes over the vocal folds without producing sound.) When activated, the vocal folds vibrate from 65 to 1300 times per second, being controlled by muscles in the larynx. The muscles of the larynx adjust the tension of the vocal folds to tune the pitch and tone. **The resonator or vocal tract**, which is the throat, mouth, cheeks, palate, nasal cavity, and nose. The **articulators** are the tongue, the lips, the hard and soft palate. (Source: "How the Voice Works," American Academy of Otolaryngology.) "Together with the teeth and jaw, the lips, and the hard and soft palate, all more or less controllable by conscious intention, the flow of air, having come already vibrating from the larynx, is tuned to articulate speech and imbued with feeling from the opening, trembling or closing of the various sounding chambers of the nasal cavity, the sinuses, and even of the throat and chest. The fundamental tone is created by powerful wind blowing across and between warm, moist, moving, finely controlled membranes and cartilaginous surfaces in the voice box; but this sound is only the raw material that will be shaped again and again until it passes through the lips and nostrils" (Frederick Turner, "The Human Voice" Newington-Cropsey Cultural Studies Center, *American Arts Quarterly*, Spring 2010).

According to Ingo Titze, director of the National Center for Voice and Speech at the University of Utah, it would be nearly impossible to create an instrument that could elongate and vibrate exactly the way human vocal cords do ("15 Throaty Facts about Vocal Cords," *Mental Floss*, Nov. 15, 2016).

The range of the human voice is vast. The loudest recorded human voice is Jill Drake, a teaching assistant who lives in England. Her scream is 129 dBA, equivalent to an AC/DC concert. The lowest note ever sung was G(-7) by Tom Storms, eight octaves below the lowest G on a piano. Storms also holds the record for the widest range, a full 10 octaves, more than 3 times the average singer's range of 3 octaves.

The human voice can express every human emotion. "The tone of the human voice may be modulated in various ways to express our emotions such as joy, happiness, anger, sadness and surprise" ("Amazing Facts about the Human Voice," Sep. 7, 2015, [worldwithtj.wordpress.com](http://worldwithtj.wordpress.com)).

The first purpose of man's singing ability is to worship God, because this is man's chief reason for existence. The first commandment is "thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (De. 6:5). Man is commanded to sing praises unto God. "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding" (Ps. 47:7).

Men have corrupted God's gifts and used them for their own selfish, wicked purposes, with no thought for God's glory. But in redemption, through the blood of Christ, the fallen sinner is restored to his place as God's son and can live for the glory of God.

Christ, the perfect man, the last Adam, sings. Zephaniah prophesies of Jehovah God singing with joy over redeemed Israel. "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zep. 3:17). We know that this refers to Christ. The writer of Hebrews cites Psalm 22:25 and applies it to Christ singing praises in the midst of the church. Imagine the Son of God singing to the Father

and to His people! He is the one who invented song and created the marvelous human voice. Pavarotti has been called “the voice of the ages,” but surely, Jesus is the true Voice of the Ages, the Singer of singers! He will sing in His glory as the eternal Son of God.

Christ is the example for every redeemed saint.

## **2. The Bible is filled with references to music.**

It should be obvious from the following study that music is no small issue in Scripture:

Satan is mentioned in connection with musical instruments before his fall (Eze. 28:12-14).

The angels sang together at the creation (Job 38:7).

Cain’s offspring made musical instruments (Ge. 4:21).

Moses and Israel sang in the wilderness (Ex. 15:1-21; Nu. 21:17).

Israel made worldly music when they committed idolatry and immorality (Ex. 32:4-6, 17-19, 25).

Deborah and Barak sang at the downfall of Sisera (Ju. 5:1-31).

The Levites were organized to sing and make music in praise to God. See 1 Ch. 15:16-28; 16:4-42; 23:3-6, 27-30; 25:1-8; 2 Ch. 5:12-13; 20:19-28; 23:13; 29:25-28; 31:2; 35:15, 25; Eze. 2:64; 3:10-11; Ne. 12:42-47.

The Psalms contain 150 musical psalms to God.

The wicked make music to entertain themselves in their rebellion to God (Job 21:12-14) and in connection with moral debauchery (Is. 5:11-12; 24:8-9; Am. 6:5-6).

Israel sang when God fought against Moab and Ammon (2 Ch. 20:14-23).

David sang to comfort Saul (1 Sa. 16:15, 16, 23).

The Israelite women sang at the return of the armies from battle (1 Sa. 18:6-7).

David made many musical instruments and organized music for the worship of God (1 Ch. 23:5; 2 Ch. 7:6; 29:26; Am. 6:5)

Solomon made musical instruments (1 Ki. 10:12; 2 Ch. 9:11; Ec. 2:8).

There are songs of fools (Ec. 7:5).

Israel sang at the coronation of Solomon (1 Ki. 1:39,40).

Israel sang at the coronation of Joash (2 Ch. 23:12-13).

Nebuchadnezzar required music to be played at his idolatrous festival (Da. 3:4-16).

Israel sang at the rededication of the temple by Hezekiah (2 Ch. 29:20-36).

Israel sang at the dedication of the rebuilt temple (Eze. 3:10-11).

Israel sang at the dedication of the rebuilt wall in Jerusalem (Ne. 12:42-47).

Jesus sang with his disciples (Mk. 14:26; He. 2:12).

The churches are commanded to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Paul and Silas sang praises to God in the jail (Ac. 16:25).

The earth will break forth in singing during the Millennium (Is. 14:7).

The end-time Babylonian world system loves music (Eze. 26:13; Re. 18:22).

There is singing in heaven (Re. 5:8-10; 14:2-3; 15:2-3).

Miscellaneous other references to music in the O.T. - Ge. 31:27; Ju. 11:34; 2 Sa. 19:35; Job 30:31; Pr. 29:6; Is. 5:12; 12:5; 14:7; 16:10; 23:16; 30:29-32; 44:23; Eze. 26:13; 33:32; 40:44; 8:10; Hab. 3:19.

## **3. The largest book of the Bible is a hymnbook.**

God gave a perfect hymnbook through Israel, His chosen nation. As the largest book in the Bible, Psalms shows the importance of sacred music before God.

There are 150 hymns that deal with all facets of God's character and every aspect of human experience and man's relationship with God. William Law said, "Singing psalms awakes all that is good and holy within you, calling your spirits to their proper duty, setting you in your best posture toward heaven, and tuning all the powers of your soul to worship and adoration."

The Psalms were sung by Israel (Ps. 66:8). Israel invented special musical instruments for singing the Psalms (2 Ch. 7:6)

The Psalms were sung by Protestants. A Metrical Psalter is an edition of the psalms meant to be sung. The Psalms are translated and adapted in such a way that they can be sung to one or more meters or tunes. **Isaac Watts** (1674-1748) published the most influential English psalter (1719). Known as "the father of English hymnology," he spent 19 years producing his Psalter and wrote another 697 hymns. Charles Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle hymnbook of 1866 contained Isaac Watts' psalter, in addition to other hymns. Watts was a pioneer in adapting the psalms so that New Testament truth is included. He wrote, "Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the Book of Psalms in public worship. ... But it must be acknowledged still, that there are a thousand lines in it which were not made for a Church in our Days, to assume as its own. There are also many deficiencies of Light and Glory, which our Lord Jesus and his Apostles have supplied to the Writings of the New Testament. ... You will also find in this Paraphrase dark expressions enlightened, and the Levitical ceremonies and Hebrew forms of speech changed into the Worship of the Gospel, and explained in the language of our time and nation" (Preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 1707). He also said, "I have not been so curious and exact in striving everywhere to express the ancient sense and meaning of David, but have rather exprest myself as I may suppose David would have done, had he lived in the Days of Christianity. And by this means perhaps I have sometimes hit upon the true Intent of the Spirit of God in those verses farther and clearer than David himself could ever discover, as St. Peter encourages me to hope, 1 Pet. 1:11, 12" (Preface to *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, 1719).

Isaac Watts' Psalter, with its three meters (tunes), is an example of singing hymns to simple melodies.

Psalm 1 (sung to the Common Meter - "Oh God Our Help in Ages Past")

1. Blest is the man who shuns the place  
Where sinners love to meet;  
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,  
And hates the scoffer's seat;  
2. But in the statutes of the Lord  
Hath placed his chief delight;  
By day he reads or hears the Word,  
And meditates by night.  
3. He like a plant of gen'rous kind,  
By living waters set,  
Safe from the storms and blasting wind,

Enjoys a peaceful state.  
4. Green as the leaf and ever fair  
Shall his profession shine,  
While fruits of holiness appear  
Like cluster on the vine.  
5. Not so the impious and unjust;  
What vain designs they form!  
Their hopes are blown away like dust,  
Or chaff before the storm.  
6. Sinners in judgment shall not stand  
Amongst the sons of grace,  
When Christ the Judge, at His right hand  
Appoints His saints a place.  
7. His eye beholds the path they tread.  
His heart approves it well;  
But crooked ways of sinners lead  
Down to the gates of hell.

#### **4. There was singing in the Old Testament Temple.**

David organized the music worship program for the temple (1 Ch. 15:16-28; 16:4-6; 23:1-5; 25:1-31), and he did this by divine revelation (2 Ch. 29:25).

Notice some lessons from these passages.

*The instruments were harps, psalteries, cymbals, trumpets and cornets* (1 Ch. 15:28). Though some churches don't believe in using music instruments, it is obvious that God loves sacred worship music. There should never have been a debate about this in churches; the Psalms are not just for the Mosaic era. Today the church is the house of God and the things in the Old Testament are an example for the churches (Ro. 15:4). Observe that these are not the type of instruments used to create worldly dance music. There were no drums, for example. (Drums can be used properly in sacred music, such as in the timpani section of an orchestra, but drums as used in pop music to emphasize the dance back rhythm are not sacred.) Cymbals are percussion instruments, but here can be no doubt that when used in the Temple worship, they were not continually banged together to create a discordant racket. That would be more in keeping with Babylonian music. The instruments mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:28 were used in accompaniment to the singing of the priests, so it is obvious that they were used in moderation so as not to drown out or overwhelm the voices.

*The singers and musicians were skillful* ("excel," 1 Ch. 15:21; "skilful," 1 Ch. 15:22; "cunning," 1 Ch. 25:7). One qualification for ministry is ability. When God calls an individual to a ministry, he gifts and equips him for that ministry. For example, the elder must be apt to teach and must be able to exhort and convince false teachers (1 Ti. 3:2; Titus 1:9). If a man cannot do this work, he is not called to be an elder.

*They excelled* (1 Ch. 15:21). They wanted everything to be as perfect as possible; mediocrity was unacceptable. Anything we do for the Lord should be done right, with the highest level of expertise and preparation that we can produce. He is most worthy of our very best. God's people need to be getting better educated, stronger in every area, moving in the opposite direction of most churches. This is the path of victory and revival.

*They were trained* (1 Ch. 25:7). Churches should do everything they can to provide training for their singers and musicians to the glory of the Creator. It is one thing to be untrained and ignorant, but it is quite another thing to be content to remain untrained and to offer unto God something less than our best. Every church must be a serious Bible training institute.

*They were well organized; they submitted to God's order and to the authority figures God had put over them; they were assigned their places* (1 Ch. 15:17, 19; 25:2, 6). The lot was used (1 Ch. 25:8) so that God's will would be done in the appointment of the singers and musicians and so that no favoritism would be exercised by the leaders. The lot was used to determine God's mind. There is no place for jealousy and carnality and favoritism in the church's music ministry. All things should be done by the mind of God and for the glory of God rather than for man. Compare 1 Co. 12:7. We don't need to use the lot today, because we have the indwelling Spirit and the complete Word of God. Submission to God-ordained authority is the way of peace in the congregation (1 Th. 5:12-13).

*The music was a ministry of the priests* (1 Ch. 15:16). Compare 1 Pe. 2:5, which teaches that the church is "an holy priesthood."

*They sang and played with enthusiasm and joy* (1 Ch. 15:16). God's people should follow this example in the churches, and the music leaders should teach and encourage it. I believe that congregational singing is a reflection of a church's spiritual character. Many of the Lord's people do not sing or sing so softly that no one can hear them, but the song service is not about me and whether or not I feel like singing or whether I like to sing, and it's not a time to be entertained. It is about singing to God and edifying one another, and it should be done with exuberance.

*They prophesied* (1 Ch. 25:1-3). Compare 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 which says that all the saints should prophesy. This doesn't mean that every member preaches. Paul limited the actual prophesying or preaching to two or three (1 Co. 14:29). 1 Corinthians 14:3 says prophesying is speaking "unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Any of that is prophesying. For all to prophesy means that every believer participates in and responds to every part of the service from the heart: to the singing and playing, to the preaching and teaching, even to the corporate prayer. I like the practice I have seen in Korean Baptist churches. During public prayer, as one brother is leading, the brethren say a loud "amen" after every statement. This is prophesying! This is unity in corporate prayer. When visitors see that the members are enthusiastically involved in the services, they understand that the brethren really do believe in Christ, and they are convicted of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*They sang God's Words* (1 Ch. 25:5). Compare Colossians 3:16. Worship must be based solidly upon Scripture; it must not be heretical or frivolous or shallow. The first test of Christian music is the test of whether its message is Scriptural. Worship music should flow from lives that

are filled richly with God's Word, and from lives that understand the Word and practice its precepts wisely in daily living. This is what creates a spiritual song service. Yet in my experience, the average member of Bible-believing churches is ignorant of God's Word and doesn't have the wisdom to apply it to daily living. No wonder our services are so lukewarm.

*They gave thanksgiving to God* (1 Ch. 25:3). This is the first and foremost purpose of the Christian life and church. There are two kinds of spiritual songs: those that teach and edify the brethren and those that praise the Lord (Col. 3:16). The churches need to make sure that they sing hymns of worship and not only songs for the edification of the saints. True worship is not a rock & roll dance party; it is not a performance. True worship is glorifying God with the mind and heart for His attributes and character and works. See Psalm 100. True worship is to give thanks to God (Heb. 13:15).

### **5. Christ's kingdom will be a singing kingdom.**

The musical worship in Solomon's Temple looks forward to the Millennial Temple when Christ will be seated on the throne of His glory and the priests will sing and play to His glory and the people will worship Him (Eze. 40:44). The Psalms are filled with prophecies of this (e.g., Psalm 33:1-11; 149:1-3; 150:3-6).

The prophecies emphasize that Christ's kingdom will be a singing kingdom.

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

"Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing" (Ps. 100:1-2).

The church-age saints will be there, ruling with Christ as kings and priests (Re. 1:6; 5:10). The apostles will sit on 12 thrones judging the tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lu. 22:30).

### **6. Christ's church is to be a singing church.**

Hymn singing was practiced by Jesus with His little flock (Mt. 26:30).

It was practiced in the first churches (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Congregational singing died in the apostasy (priestcraft destroyed the priesthood of believers). But it was practiced by Bible believers throughout church history. The Baptists of old loved to sing, and their songs and hymns were sacred in character and biblical in doctrine. They put entire sermons or Bible stories or histories of martyrdom into song. Some of their hymns had 45 stanzas! Bathasar Hubmaier's hymn "A Song in Praise of God's Word" is 18 stanzas and covers the whole Bible from Adam to Christ! See [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Balthasar\\_H%C3%BCbmaier/Hymn](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Balthasar_H%C3%BCbmaier/Hymn).

Singing of hymns was practiced by the Protestants. Martin Luther is one of the fathers of congregational singing in modern times. He understood the importance of singing in the Christian life and church. He wanted all of the people to sing, unlike in the Catholic Church where the singing was usually done by choirs and was in Latin rather than in the people's language. He said, "I wish to compose sacred hymns so that the Word of God may dwell among the people also by means of songs" (Kenneth Osbeck, *Singing with Understanding*, p. 48).

Luther used melodies that were easy to learn and remember for all classes of people. He did not use drinking songs or songs that would remind the listeners of the evil things of the world. "Of the melodies to Luther's thirty-seven chorales, fifteen were composed by Luther himself, thirteen came from Latin hymns or Latin service music, four were derived from German religious folk songs, two had originally been religious pilgrims' songs, two are of unknown origin, and one came directly from a secular folk song. ... Luther's plan was to develop a unique style of music for use in worship. Luther didn't rely on the sensual, erotic music of his day. He didn't look to those who would rebel against his very culture to serve as a model for his music. ... Harrell concludes: 'A study of Luther's chorales reveals two important facts about Luther's use of secular elements in his sacred music: (1) ALTHOUGH THERE WAS MUCH POPULAR MUSIC AVAILABLE TO HIM, FROM DRINKING SONGS AND DANCE TUNES TO RELIGIOUS FOLK SONGS AND CAROLS, LUTHER CHOSE ONLY THOSE TUNES WHICH WOULD BEST LEND THEMSELVES TO SACRED THEMES AND AVOIDED THE VULGAR, 'ROLLICKING DRINKING SONGS' AND DANCE TUNES. (2) No material which Luther used for a chorale remained unchanged, except for the one case noted previously. Rather, he carefully tested ... the melodies he considered, and when necessary molded them into suitability. Alterations were freely made'" (Tim Fisher, *The Battle for Christian Music*, data compiled from several sources quoted in Robert Harrell, *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message*, p. 18)."

Charles Wesley wrote 6,500 hymns, many of which are still sung widely. He, too, was careful in the use of any secular tunes. "The Wesleys did, indeed, make use of secular music as hymn tunes--rarely. And when they did, THE MUSIC ALWAYS WAS FROM SOURCES OF RECOGNIZABLE BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCE, such as an original composition by the great composer Handel as a tune for 'Rejoice, the Lord Is King.' Other secular sources used by the Wesleys included the classical music of their day, a few opera tunes, and perhaps a folk song or two. But IN EVERY CASE WHERE THEY MADE USE OF SECULAR MUSIC FOR THEIR HYMNS, IT WAS ALWAYS OF THE VERY HIGHEST CALIBER, never a little ditty, jingle or disposable contemporary pop tune of the day that would be cast aside as soon as the next one was penned" (Dean McIntyre, United Methodist News Service, Sept. 30, 2002).

Isaac Watts led a revival of hymn singing and psalm singing in the 18th century, as we have seen.

Singing of hymns was practiced in times of revival. The great spiritual revival in the late 1800s and early 1900s was accompanied by a great hymn writing moving (e.g., Philip Bliss, Fanny Crosby, Ira Sanky, Frances Havergal, Charlotte Elliot, Augustus Toplady).

**7. Church music must be sung and played by Spirit-filled saints who are in-dwelt with God's Word.**

“be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18-19).

“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

When dealing with the music issue, God begins with the spiritual condition of the church and of the individual singers and players. Sound congregational singing requires a spiritual house made of living stones, referring to born again people who are actively functioning as holy priests. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pe. 2:5).

We find the definition of Spirit filling in the context of Ephesians 5:18. It means not controlled by anything other than the Spirit of God (not alcohol or drugs, “not drunk with wine,” not the works of darkness, Eph. 5:11). Spirit filled means not spiritually asleep, carnal, lukewarm (“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,” Eph. 5:14). Spirit filled means not careless and foolish but rather walking in God’s will (Eph. 5:15-17). “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*.”

To let the word of Christ dwell in you richly is another description of the foundation of a spiritual song service (Col. 3:16). Note that the word of Christ is to dwell in you (plural). It is to dwell in the entire church body, not just in a few. Every member is to be filled with the Spirit by being filled with God’s Word. This happens when every member is born again and surrenders to God’s will and becomes a serious Bible student. The Word of God is to fill our minds and hearts. The church must be immersed in Scripture. Note that each believer is to “let the word of God dwell.” It is a choice. I can fill my life with Scripture. I can read it. I can learn how to study it and understand it. I can delight in it and meditate on it day and night (Ps. 1:2). I can test everything by it and thereby exercise my spiritual senses (Heb. 5:14). Note that the word of Christ is to dwell in the believers “in all wisdom.” The Word of God must produce spiritual wisdom in the lives of God’s people. It is not a matter of rote reading, learning, and memorizing. The Word of God must get down into every part of the believers’ lives and conform them to God’s will.

To sing “with grace in your hearts to the Lord” is a description of born again people who are engaged with the Lord from the heart. They are abiding in Christ, communing with Him, walking with Him, walking in the light with Him. They are people who are saved by grace and walking in grace and loving grace. No other kind of people can sing in such a manner.

If the spiritual condition of a church deteriorates, so does the spiritual character of the song service.

“We must desire to be godly in character since we are ministering godly music. Our example sings loudest. We must be exemplary (1 Ti. 4:12). Worldliness cannot be sanitized. God doesn’t just accept whatever people offer. Do we personally listen to bad music? This will affect us. How can we pray for God’s blessings and at the same time shake hands with the world? Are we attracted to or addicted to worldliness in music?” (Chris Starr, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Brogue, Pennsylvania).

## **8. Church music is for singing to one another and unto the Lord.**

“Speaking to yourselves ... singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).  
“... teaching and admonishing one another ... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

The two-fold purpose of church singing is to edify the saints and to worship God. This is emphasized by means of repetition, being repeated in two of the church epistles.

*Sacred music is for teaching and admonishing one another.* The song service is a “one another” ministry. Sacred music is a function of the church body (Eph. 4:16) and of the holy priesthood (1 Pe. 2:5). Each member is commanded to teach and admonish the other brethren, so church singing is not about me, not about my choices, my pleasure, my feelings; it’s not about whether or not I want to participate. It is about dying to the old self and submitting to God’s authority and being a holy priest and ministering to the brethren.

“Mr. [Charles] Spurgeon evidently takes delight in the service of song, and is anxious above all things that every man, woman, and child in the place should sing. In announcing the hymn he generally makes some remark, such as, ‘Let us sing joyfully the 48th Psalm,’ – ‘Dear friends, this hymn is full of joy, let’s sing it with all our hearts,’ &c.” (J.S. Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 1880).

Ministering to “one another” involves first ministering the message of the song or hymn to oneself.

*Sacred music is also to be sung “to the Lord.”* Singing to the Lord is pure worship. “The Lord” is Jesus Christ. He is Lord of lords. He made me; He owns me; He loves me; He redeemed me; my sole purpose is to live for His pleasure and glory. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Ro. 11:36). “he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Ac. 17:25). “for in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Ac. 17:28). “by him were all things created ... And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17).

We should include pure worship songs in the congregational singing and instruct the people to sing those directly to the Lord as prayers from the heart. Examples of hymns that are prayers directed to God or direct praise about God are as follows: “All Hail the Power,” “Cleanse Me,” “Come, Thou Almighty King,” “Come Thou Fount,” “Draw Me Nearer,” “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” “I Need Thee Every Hour,” “Jesus, I Am Resting,” “Jesus Lover of My Soul,” “Jesus! the Very Thought of Thee,” “Lead Me Gently Home Father,” “Lead Me to Calvary,” “Make Me a Blessing,” “More Love to Thee,” “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” “My Jesus I Love Thee,” “O To Be Like Thee!” “O Worship the King,” “Open My Eyes That I May See,” “Our Great Savior,” “Rock of Ages,” “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” “To God Be the Glory,” “Whiter Than Snow.” Some hymns are a combination of singing to the brethren and singing directly to the Lord. Examples are “Day by Day,” “Living for Jesus,” and “I’m Pressing on the Upward Way.”

**9. Church music must be sound in doctrine (“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,” Col. 3:16).**

The words of the songs must be theologically sound according to the teaching of the Bible.

And we want more than just theological soundness, we want theological depth. We want richness of truth that will edify deeply and broadly. This is why we don't want only a diet of revivalist songs. These were written for a mixed-multitude evangelistic forum, such as those written by Ira Sankey for a D.L. Moody crusade, and therefore lack depth. "Sankey's songs were simple and direct, appealing to the heart and leading to a decision." Examples are "Tell Me the Old Story," "There'll Be No Dark Valley," "Throw out the Life Line," "Wonderful Words of Life," "I Need Thee Every Hour," "The Cleansing Fountain," "Faith Is the Victory," and "Trusting Jesus." The *Sword of the Lord's Soul Stirring Songs and Hymns* is in the Sankey revivalist tradition. These are all good hymns and have their place, but there is also a need for hymns of greater spiritual and doctrinal depth to challenge the people and better educate them and to build them up to a higher level.

A great deal of Contemporary Christian Music is unacceptable because it represents ecumenical charismatic doctrine or it presents a vague message that lacks doctrinal clarity and strength.

God's people must weigh every song and hymn by the absolute standard of God's Word. Just because a song is in a good hymnbook doesn't mean that it is sound. Just because it has a pleasant tune and people like it doesn't mean that it is acceptable. For example, the chorus "Spirit of the Living God" is a prayer addressed to the Spirit, which we never see in Scripture. We are taught to pray to the Father (Mt. 6:9). And the idea of the Spirit falling fresh on me isn't Scriptural. He doesn't fall on God's people; He indwells them. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" teaches the liberal social gospel. The author, Julia Ward Howe, was a Unitarian universalist who rejected Jesus Christ as the Son of God. She interpreted the Union armies of the American North as the coming of Christ. The "watch-fires" of the Union army camps are the altar of God, and "the burnish'd rows of steel" bayonets are the gospel. "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" teaches the post-millennial heresy that the preaching of the gospel will bring in Christ's kingdom by "conquering evil" and "shattering the spear and sword."

"Godly music is word-enriched and loaded with sound doctrine. Godly music packages Bible doctrines in memorable format" (Chris Starr).

#### **10. Church music must emphasize "melody" ("making melody in your heart," Eph. 5:19).**

Melody is the simplest part of music. It is the basic tune. It is the part that can be sung and hummed and whistled. We can't sing harmony and chords.

A good melody reinforces the words and helps God's people remember the words and edify themselves with the words all their days.

By emphasizing melody, God's Word teaches us to keep the music simple so it doesn't distract from the message of the words. There should be a good singable melody, and the rest of the music should never overwhelm the melody. The music must never become so complicated or harmonic or loud that it drowns out the simple melody. In sacred music, a simple musical arrangement is superior to an overly complicated one.

“In common life the music presides. But in Godly music, the words (lyrics, or the message) preside. The music serves as an accompaniment to the message. Godly music is the harmonious balance between tunes that fit or compliment the lyrics” (Chris Starr).

### **11. Church music must be sung from the heart.**

“singing and making melody in your heart” (Eph. 5:19).

“singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).

The singing and playing of sacred music is a heart affair.

By the heart, we are not talking primarily about the emotions but about man’s fundamental interior. In the Bible, the heart refers to the center of man’s thinking, emotions, and will. The heart thinks (Pr. 23:7), understands (Pr. 2:2), meditates (Ps. 19:14), considers (De. 4:39), purposes (Da. 1:8), takes counsel (Pr. 20:5), reasons (Lk. 5:22), desires (Ro. 10:1), has intents (Heb. 4:12). From the heart proceed all the actions and motivations of man (Pr. 4:23-27; Mt. 15:18-20).

Both the mouth and the heart are to be fully engaged. Sacred music is not something that is done by rote or by vain tradition. It is not unthinking, not unfeeling, not religious ritual, not mere duty, not habit or tradition, not just mindless loud singing like a boisterous child.

“Godly music is interested in the heart condition as much as the mechanics of good singing or instrumentation. Add to this that God is a heart-inspector (1 Sa. 16:7; 1 Ki. 8:39b; 1 Ch. 28:9b; Ps. 7:9; Je. 17:10; Ac. 1:24). What is the embouchure of your heart? Is your heart tuned to God and His Word?” (Chris Starr).

### **12. Music is not “neutral”; it is a language and the message of the music must match the message of the lyrics.**

The foundational philosophy of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) is the idea that music is neutral or amoral and that any style of music can be used in the service of God. The Christian Rocker’s Creed says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all music was created equal, that no instrument or style of music is in itself evil—that the diversity of musical expression which flows forth from man is but one evidence of the boundless creativity of our heavenly Father.” Harold Best says, “[Music is] morally relative ... [It is] essentially neutral in its ability to express belief, creed, moral and ethic exactitudes, or even world view” (*Music Through the Eyes of Faith*). Don Butler, former head of the Gospel Music Association, says, “Every style and form of music can become gospel, whether it’s jazz, pop, rock ‘n’ roll, or rap.” Rick Warren, Southern Baptist megachurch pastor, says, “There’s no such thing as Christian music. There are just Christian lyrics” (SuperConference 2003, Liberty University).

This is why Contemporary Christian Music encompasses every sort of pop music style: blues, ragtime, boogie woogie, jazz, big band swing, country, rock, urban, techno, metal, thrash, punk, rap/hip hop.

The concept that music is neutral is fundamental. As soon as this is accepted, the battle is lost. It erases all boundaries, and the very concept of “sacred music” is lost.

But no one except defenders of contemporary Christian music believes this. If all musical styles are neutral, why does a military march never sound like a romance ballad, and why does a baby lullaby never sound like a punk rock concert? The reason is that music is *not* neutral; music is a language.

Rock & rollers don't believe that music is neutral. Timothy Leary, 1960s LSD guru and pop culture hero, said, “Don't listen to the words, it's the music that has its own message.” Rock historian Robert Palmer says, “The transformative power of rock lies ... in the music itself ...” (Robert Palmer, *Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*).

Movie text painters (creators of sound tracks) don't believe that music is neutral. They know that different styles of music create different emotional responses, and they must use the right type of music to fit the message presented by the scene's pictures and words. John Debney, one of the top composers of movie films, says: “I think music is the voice of the soul of the emotional fabric of the film” (“The Passion of the Musicians,” *Christianity Today* web site, Aug. 31, 2004). Debney is talking about the power of music as a language.

Orchestra composers and conductors don't believe that music is neutral. Each style of music played by an orchestra creates different feelings and thoughts in the listeners. Howard Hanson, who directed the prestigious Eastman School of Music for 40 years, said, “Music can be philosophical or orgiastic. It has powers for evil as well as for good” (cited from Frank Garlock *The Language of Music*; Garlock is a graduate of Eastman).

The Christian Rocker's Creed, that no musical *style* is evil, denies that man is evil and that he can create evil with his art. The first musical instruments were made by the sons of Cain who were in open rebellion to God's holy laws. It is ridiculous to think that they were using those instruments for anything other than evil.

The Christian Rocker's Creed, that no musical *style* is evil, denies the existence of Satan as “the god of this world.” It would deny his role in the human arts. It would deny that men walk “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). The devil hates God and has attempted to corrupt everything that God has created. He is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) and “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). He has corrupted religion, literature, art, fashion--you name it. Music is one of the most powerful influences in society. To think that the devil has not corrupted music for his own wicked purposes and for the sensual enticement of fallen man is contrary to everything the Bible teaches. The issue, then, for a Christ-honoring believer is to find the devil's fingerprints in music and to reject such music.

The Bible plainly teaches that music is not neutral, that different styles of music present different messages and have different emotional effects. The Bible describes a party sound (Ex. 32:17-19) and a refreshing sound (1 Sa. 16:23). Paul teaches that music is a language in 1 Corinthians 14:7-8, “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a

distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

Music is a language, and in fact it is one of the most powerful languages in human society! It has been called "the language of the soul" and "the language of the emotions."

In Christian music, therefore, the message of the music must match the message of the lyrics and both must be spiritual in character. This is the very definition of sacred music.

There are styles of music that preach a message that is contrary to the Bible and should be avoided in the service of a holy God.

We must, therefore, exercise discernment. We must ask, "What kind of message is this music presenting? Does the message of the music fit the message of the lyrics?" We must do exactly what the Bible says. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

Since music is a language, God's people must carefully, wisely test the language of every piece of church music.

**13. Church music must be holy and separate from the world (Ro. 12:2; Eph. 4:17-19; 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pe. 2:11; 1 Jo. 2:15-16).**

"Spiritual" means set apart for God, different from the world. Spiritual is that which is under the control of the Spirit of God, as explained in the verse previous to Ephesians 5:19. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Spiritual is the opposite of carnal, fleshly. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Spiritual is the opposite of the unfruitful works of darkness that are mentioned in Ephesians 5:11 in the same context as Ephesians 5:19. Spiritual is the opposite of worldliness. "And be not conformed to this world..." (Ro. 12:2). "Love not world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jo. 2:15-16).

Paul is saying that God's people are to sing songs that are holy, sacred, that are set apart for God, that are not carnal and fleshly, that are different in quality from the songs of the world, that are morally pure, that are of a heavenly flavor rather than a worldly.

This means that the church's music will not sound like world's pop music and the music that the world uses for dancing and drinking and partying. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life is a perfect definition of modern pop music, and this is admitted by rockers. Deborah Harry of Blondie says, "The main ingredients in rock are sex and sass." The music of a holy God should contain no aspect of the world's sensual ways. To borrow from the world's

unholy music is confusion. It is sin. It is a reflection of the end-times “after their own lusts” apostasy (2 Ti. 4:3-4).

Pop styles of music that we purposefully avoid are the backbeat, beat anticipation, honky tonk (ragtime, boogie woogie, etc., that are popular in Southern Gospel), sensual vocal styles (e.g., scooping, sliding, breathiness, vocal fry), soft, overly emotional styles that are created by the wrong use of chords (e.g., unresolving chord cadences). The “soft sound” softens the power, dynamism, majesty, spiritual conviction, and militarism of sacred music.

We avoid the use of drums and electric guitars in church music, because they are so totally identified with rock music and so easily used in a pop music fashion. (An exception is the use of drums in a timpani section of an orchestra.)

(For more education on this see “The Language of Music Styles” and “Bob Jones, Majesty Music, New Reformed Calvinism, and the Gettys,” which are two segments of the video series *The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music*, available for free viewing and downloading from [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

### **13. Church music must edify.**

“How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. LET ALL THINGS BE DONE UNTO EDIFYING” (1 Co. 14:26).

The words “edify,” “understand,” “meaning,” and “knowledge” are used 17 times in this chapter.

“Edify” means to build up in the faith by means of hearing and understanding the truth of God’s Word. Webster’s 1828 dictionary defined edify as “to instruct and improve the mind in knowledge generally, and particularly in moral and religious knowledge, in faith and holiness.”

*All things being done unto edification means that sacred music must emphasize the message.* The message must be clear so that it speaks to the people’s minds and hearts and thus edifies. Nothing must be allowed to detract from this. Musical instruments can be too loud and drown out the message. Music can be so complex that it hinders the message. If the harmonies, for example, are so complex that the message is not clear, that is not good sacred music.

*All things being done unto edification means there is no place for entertainment in sacred music.* Entertainment is about the performer, but sacred music is about Christ. Entertainment is for man’s pleasure, but sacred music is for God’s pleasure. We want to purposefully and emphatically avoid anything that speaks of entertainment. This is why we do not applaud special music. This is why we don’t use sensual vocal techniques that draw attention to the singer (scooping, sliding, breathiness, vocal fry). This is why we don’t use video cameras to spotlight the singers and musicians and highlight them on video screens. These things are the way of performance and entertainment, not the way of true worship. It is carnally distracting. It is impossible to conceive of such things being used in Solomon’s Temple or the Millennial Temple.

*All things being done unto edification means that each song should be selected because of its message. If the message is theologically wrong (e.g., “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”) or weak (e.g., “Church in the Wild Wood”), there is no edification.*

*All things being done unto edification means there must be education. If the message of the song is spiritual but couched in words that are not understood by the congregation, there is still no edification. Many of the old hymns use words that must be explained. The song “A Mighty Fortress” contains the words, “Lord Sabaoth is His name,” and “Come, Thou Fount” says, “I will raise mine Ebenezer.” Other songs speak of of *Hepzebah* and *Beulah Land*. Unless the meaning of these words are known by the congregation, there is no edification. The song leader should briefly define any uncommon words.*

*All things being done unto edification means the people must be taught and reminded to think about the words of the songs. No matter how spiritual the songs are, if the people are not meditating on them, no edification is accomplished.*

### **15. Church music should be joyful.**

“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods” (Ps. 95:1-3).

Congregational singing should be enthusiastic and cheerful. God’s people are coming into His presence. The great King of kings is listening and He requires a joyful noise!

To teach and admonish one another in song and to sing unto the Lord is not a half-hearted thing. Since Christ hates lukewarm, He must hate lukewarm singing (Re. 3:15-16).

We don’t always “feel like” singing unto the Lord, but we must control our feelings and stir ourselves up with the truth of God’s Word. When coming to the church’s song service, I must say to myself, “It is time to worship the wonderful God who has loved you and redeemed you and who cares for you. It is time to forget my problems and focus on the Great Redeemer and my priestly work for Him.”

### **16. Church music must not borrow from and thus build bridges to the world of contemporary Christian music (Ro. 16:17-18; 1 Co. 10:21; 15:33; 2 Co. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 Ti. 3:5; Re. 18:4).**

Contemporary Christian Music is a major element of building the apostate one-world church and represents this world with all of its doctrinal, spiritual, and moral dangers

This is evident by examining the history of this music as well as the lives and beliefs and associations of contemporary musicians as we have done in the free eBook *The Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians*. See also the video presentation “CCM a Bridge to Dangerous Waters,” which is one of the segments in the video series *The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music*, available for free viewing and downloading at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org). (This was recorded in September 2019 and is scheduled to be published at the end of 2019 or early 2020 and will replace

the series *Music for Good and Evil* and the individual presentations “The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music” and “The Transformational Power of Contemporary Praise Music.”)

In former times, God’s people were not in much danger of being influenced by the authors of songs and hymns. But the Internet has changed that dramatically. Now if a song is sung in a church, the people can go online and find the author and communicate quite intimately with him or her and his associates and his “world.”

**17. Church music must not produce a charismatic style mystical experience (“be sober,” 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8).**

Sober is the Greek *nepho*, which is always used in the context of watching (1 Pe. 4:7; 5:8; 1 Th. 5:6; 2 Ti. 4:5). It means to be in control of one’s mind. It means to guard the mind against wrong thoughts and to think right thoughts according to God’s Word.

To be sober forbids the believer to follow the “be open to new experiences, don’t quench the Spirit by testing” philosophy of the charismatic movement and contemporary worship.

Contemporary worship music is largely a rock & roll feeling-fest. It is designed to create an emotional experience, a sensual experience, as opposed to a sacred music style that edifies through the understanding. It is designed to carry the listeners along on an emotional roller coaster. Graham Kendrick, one of the biggest names in contemporary worship, says, “The old way of preaching and singing began to give way to an expectation that ... God would visit us, and we’d EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE IN A TANGIBLE SORT OF WAY” (interview June 11, 2002 with Chris Davidson of Integrity Music).

To produce “experiential worship,” contemporary musicians use music with a sensual dance rhythms, non-resolving chord sequences, repetition, electronic modulation, and other things so that people will get carried away emotionally. There is a hypnotic effect.

But the Bible tells us to be sober-minded and not to allow anything to capture our hearts and souls other than God and His Word. We are not supposed to open ourselves up unquestioningly to any force or experience, but we are to test everything continually by the standard of God’s absolute Truth (Pr. 14:12; 2 Co. 10:5; 1 Th. 5:21-22; Heb. 5:14). Thus we refuse to be controlled by highly emotional music.

**18. Church music must be skillful.**

“And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obedom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith TO EXCEL. And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, *was* for song: he instructed about the song, because he *was* SKILFUL” (1 Ch. 15:21-22).

“Sing unto him a new song; play SKILFULLY with a loud noise” (Ps. 33:3).

Jesus Christ is worthy of our very best. The hymn says, “Give of your best to the Master,” and that is what we want to do with sacred music. We want to lead it, sing it, and play it with the highest level of expertise and preparation that we can produce, not for our glory, but for God’s. We want to be getting better educated, better prepared, stronger in every area. This is the path of spiritual victory and revival. Pastor Chris Starr says, “Let’s keep the regular church service music excellent and a cut above the average. Our music must reflect excellence because our God is excellent in all that He does. Refuse and resist the casual look and casual feel.”

Far too many times I have heard singers say something like, “Well, folks, we haven’t been able to practice much, but we hope you get a blessing anyway.”

### **19. Church music must be unquestionably right and safe.**

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, we are to prove all things and hold fast only that which is good, avoiding even the very appearance of evil.

That is the highest possible standard for music. This is one reason why we avoid the use of snare drums and electric guitars. Even if they are used to play the right kind of sound, they are too intimately identified with rock music, and we want to avoid all such identity.

This is our fundamental music standard. If a song or hymn is questionable, we want to avoid it. If we aren’t sure if it is right, sound, and healthy, we want to avoid it. There is a wealth of unquestionably sound, doctrinally strong, spiritual, non-worldly, non-charismatic music, that is not associated with the contemporary worship movement. To avoid a piece of questionable music never harms a church, but using questionable music can definitely bring harm.

This is the standard of wisdom and safety.

### **20. Church music must guard against incrementalism (“a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” 1 Co. 5:6; Ga. 5:9).**

When it comes to church music, little can be big. The wrong music usually enters a church gradually, not overnight. One way it enters is through specials, choruses, and youth ministries. I witnessed this some years ago on a preaching trip to 12 churches in three countries. In each of the churches, the congregational music was sacred, but in about half of the churches, the special music was at least mildly contemporary. I saw that the men in charge of the music did not know how to discern contemporary music and therefore it was slipping in unawares. When this happens, the church is doomed to continue moving away from spiritual and toward contemporary unless there is a dramatic move to stop the progression, which is exceedingly rare.

“As the pastor, I have tested and made some judgments regarding the music we have in our church. ... [Some genres of music] have slippery slopes, and we want to be far away from the slope in our church music” (Chris Starr).

### **21. Church music must aim for excellence.**

“that ye may approve things that are excellent” (Php. 1:10).

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Co. 10:31).

Everything about the church’s music must be done on purpose, with biblical and spiritual wisdom, always aiming for the very best, the very highest, never satisfied with mediocrity, progressing in excellence. This is not for the glory of man, but for the glory of God. If the world strives for excellence for human profit and glory, how much more should God’s people strive for excellence for God’s glory!

We must aim for excellence in the standards for singers and musicians, in the selection of every song and hymn, in the conducting of every aspect of the song service, and in the quality of the singing and playing.

This standard requires continual education of the entire church in the issue of music. The goal is not merely to “hold the line,” but to grow in wisdom and knowledge and discernment in order to please the Lord at an ever higher level.

## **22. Pastors must oversee the church’s music.**

“the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (Ac. 20:28)

“obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17)

“taking the oversight thereof” (1 Pe. 5:2)

Pastors are called “bishops,” which means overseers or superintendents. As God’s stewards, they must watch over every aspect of the congregation’s life and ministry to see that things are done according to God’s will. They must know what is happening in order to protect the flock from danger and error.

Pastors must, therefore, study the issue of music, because it is a biblical issue and because it is a major force in modern society and therefore a major potential influence on God’s people. They must educate themselves about sacred music and know how to discern various popular sounds of music, such as soft rock, and they must increase their education. They should learn how to read music, at the very least. That is not a very difficult project. A good start in this education is to go through all of the materials recommended at the end of *Church Music Standards and Training Course*.

Pastors must appoint the *right people* to be in charge of the church’s music. If there are no right people, they must pray that God will bring them from outside or raise them up in the congregation.

Pastors must approve all special music and/or appoint a wise person to do this under their direction. There must be a proper gatekeeper or the wrong music will slip in and become leaven that will increase.

## **23. God’s people should aim to learn to sing and play music.**

We are commanded to praise God with trumpets, psalteries, harps, timbrels, stringed instruments, organs, loud cymbals, and high sounding cymbals (Ps. 150). That is an orchestra!

Born again Christians are priests (1 Pe. 2:5, 9), and the priests in the former dispensation were singers and players of instruments, as we have seen.

Children and young people in the churches should be learning music so that they can glorify and serve God, and they should be ever learning how to discern sacred from contemporary music styles.

This is a good incentive to holiness and to the wholesome use of time.

## STANDARDS FOR MUSIC PERSONNEL

1. The singers and musicians must be members of the church in good standing and must meet the church's standards for workers. Following is an example:

\* *Good Christian testimony* (2 Co. 8:18). Church workers must have a good testimony so that the name of Christ and the reputation of the church are not injured. There must be a good testimony in the home, in the church, in the school, and on the job.

\* *Faithfulness* (1 Co. 4:2; Pr. 25:19). Church workers must be faithful--faithful to the church services and required activities (Heb. 10:25), faithful to their assigned church duties, etc. If a church worker must miss a service or other required activity because of his job or some emergency, he should inform the leaders.

\* *Honest reputation* (2 Co. 8:21). Church workers must be honest in their dealings with all men and must have a reputation of honesty. The church worker must not steal, must not lie, and must pay his debts.

\* *Diligence* (2 Co. 8:22). Church workers must show diligence in their Christian lives and in their work for the Lord. A person who is lazy and half-hearted should not be involved in Christian ministry. See also Ro. 12:11; Eph. 4:28; 1 Th. 4:11; 2 Th. 3:10.

\* *Sound in doctrine* (1 Co. 1:10; 1 Ti. 1:3). Church workers must agree 100% with the doctrines of the Bible as taught by the church.

\* *Godly submission to the pastor-elders* (1 Th. 5:12-13; 1 Ti. 5:17; Heb. 13:17). Pastors are not lord's over the church (1 Pe. 5:1-3), but they are overseers. God has given them authority to teach the Word of God, to exhort in the way of righteousness, to lead in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, and to discipline those who err. Thus, as long as the pastors are following the Bible, the church members should submit and be a blessing to and seek for unity in the congregation. (See *Pastors, Deacons, and Church Members*, a free eBook available from [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

\* *Separation from the evil things of the world* (Ro. 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4). Church workers must avoid such things as unwholesome movies and television programs and YouTube, worldly things on social media, video games, using or selling liquor, and worldly partying. They should also not work in places where such things are conducted. Church workers should avoid worldly music such as cinema music, pop music, and contemporary Christian music.

\* *Modest dress*. The following are six Bible principles that teach God's people how to dress properly in this fallen world. Our church requires that the female workers dress in a modest

fashion all of the time and not just when they are at church. *First, the Christian's clothing must cover the body properly and not expose the parts of the body which have particular sexual appeal.* Isaiah 47:2 says that for a woman to bare her leg and thigh is nakedness. Thus immodest clothing would include skirts or dresses that show the leg, shorts, slit skirts that tease, low blouses, short blouses that bare the midriff, deep V-necked dresses, backless dresses, halter tops, and any modern swimsuit. Immodest clothing would also include any style that uses flimsy material that can be seen through. *Second, the Christian's clothing does not sensually accent the body.* Tight, clinging attire is as immodest as skimpy attire because the woman's figure is emphasized and accented. *Third, the Christian's clothing is not extravagant.* When the apostle deals with modest attire in 1 Timothy 2:9, he mentions "broided hair, gold, pearls, and costly array." The goal of this world's godless fashion industry is to create a haughty, ostentatious, worldly-wise look, as well as a sexual look. The godly woman will reject such fashions. This means that a godly woman would not wear excessive jewelry and makeup that would draw undue attention to herself. We must remember to "let our moderation be known unto all men" (Php. 4:5). We must dress for the Lord's glory and not our own (1 Co. 10:31). *Fourth, the Christian's clothing is to be sexually distinctive* (Ge. 1:27; De. 22:5; 1 Co. 11:14-15). The woman's attire and appearance is to be distinctively feminine and the man's distinctively masculine. The modern unisex movement is in open rebellion against Almighty God and His Word, and the Christian should have nothing to do with any fashion associated with it. We believe that this means the woman should not wear pants, because these have historically been man's apparel and it was the feminist unisex movement in the 1960s that popularized pants on women. Revolutionary fashion designers such as Mary Quant, inventor of the mini-skirt, wore pants as a sign of "woman's liberation." This also means that men should not wear long hair or earrings or anything that is feminine in appearance. *Fifth, the Christian's clothing is to be identified with holiness and godliness and not to be identified with anything that is evil* (1 Th. 5:22; Eph. 5:11). If a clothing style is clearly identified with rebellion against God's laws, with anarchy, with sexual license, with blasphemy, with idolatry, with moral decadence, or with any other evil it should not be worn by a Christian. This would prohibit fashions, for example, that have come out of the world of punk and rap, such as long hair on men, tattoos, tight jeans on women, torn jeans, low pants, and such. This would also prohibit tattoos with their historic identification with rebellion and paganism. *Sixth, the Christian's clothing is to mark him or her as peculiar unto the Lord, as one who has been redeemed from all iniquity and who is zealous for good works* (Titus 2:14). God's people are to be separate, peculiar, different, set apart, pilgrims, heavenly citizens in a foreign world. We must bear His stamp. We must stand out from the crowd because we are walking by heaven's light. We must not fly the world's flag. When God's people are no longer peculiar before the world they have compromised the Word of God. We must fear God more than man. We must be more concerned about pleasing God than man. We must not draw back from bearing Christ's reproach in this wicked world. He said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38). Paul said that if we deny Christ, he also will deny us (2 Ti. 2:12).

2. Singers and musicians must be faithful to and on time for everything pertaining to the music ministry, including practices. Being on time means being early enough to be in your place and fully prepared to start. If an individual is sick or otherwise predisposed, he or she must contact the leader as soon as possible.

3. Singers and musicians must maintain a humble, servant spirit, not promoting themselves, not pushing themselves forward, not pressing themselves into a ministry, not requiring that they sing/play frequently.
4. Singers and musicians must be ministers and not performers or self-seekers. “If someone compliments you on a song you played or sang, it is proper to say thank you and then to direct one’s attention to the glory of God.”
5. Singers and musicians must be well prepared for their part in every musical ministry in the church. Everything must be well practiced. Instruments must be tuned. Hearts must be engaged with the Lord and with the Lord’s people. Last minute preparation is not acceptable. Consider the Junior/Teen instrumentalist policy for Mt. Zion Baptist Church of Brogue, Pennsylvania: “Have the hymn/arrangement approved at least one month before you are on the schedule to play, then play it for Mrs. ----- at least two weeks before you are scheduled. Please let Mrs. ----- know the source of your hymn/arrangement. We want to stay away from last minute preparation. Failure to have your music approved by and played for Mrs. ----- will result in the forfeiture of the hymn/arrangement being played and will result in not being on the special music schedule the next quarter. Mrs. ----- may take time to explain why the hymn you chose may not be the best choice. She may ask you to select a different hymn, practice more and follow up with her, and she may give you pointers on dynamics, tempo, timing, posture, etc.”
6. When ministering in the services, singers and musicians must be dressed properly, clean and neat and well groomed, and must present themselves in a good manner. “Realize you are always on display when you are on the platform. Do a mirror check in between services before you come on the platform. Avoid platform distractions (talking, whispering, chewing gum, yawning, open eyes during prayer, looking angry or bored, etc). Facial expressions and body language communicate a lot! Minimize movement to and from the platform so as to not distract from what is taking place in the service” (Chris Starr).

## **STANDARDS OF CHURCH MUSIC**

The following standards are summarized and abbreviated from “Biblical Principles of Music” in *Church Music Standards and Training Course* ([www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)). See “Biblical Principles of Music” for the full teaching on these points and references to further explanation and training.

The churches need to train the people in music so well that they can test it by biblical standards. They must be able to discern such things as soft rock, honky tonk, dance rhythms, chords as used in CCM, and worldly vocal styles.

It is not enough to publish a list of unacceptable music. Such lists are helpful, but any list will be obsolete in a short time. Further, no list is exhaustive.

### **The music must be sound in doctrine (Col. 3:16).**

The words of the songs must be theologically sound according to the teaching of the Bible. A great deal of Contemporary Christian Music is unacceptable because it represents ecumenical

charismatic doctrine or it presents a vague message that lacks doctrinal clarity and strength. God's people must weigh every song and hymn by the absolute standard of God's Word. Just because a song is in a good hymnbook doesn't mean that it is sound theologically. Just because it has a pleasant tune and people like it doesn't mean that it is acceptable.

We want more than just theological soundness, we want theological depth. We want richness of truth that will edify deeply and broadly. This is why we don't want only a diet of revivalist songs. These were written for a mixed-multitude evangelistic forum, such as those written by Ira Sankey for a D.L. Moody crusade, and therefore lack depth. "Sankey's songs were simple and direct, appealing to the heart and leading to a decision." Examples are "Tell Me the Old Story," "There'll Be No Dark Valley," "Throw out the Life Line," "Wonderful Words of Life," "I Need Thee Every Hour," "The Cleansing Fountain," "Faith Is the Victory," and "Trusting Jesus." The *Sword of the Lord's Soul Stirring Songs and Hymns* is in the Sankey revivalist tradition. These are all good hymns and have their place, but there is also a need for hymns of greater spiritual and doctrinal depth to challenge the people and better educate them and to build them up to a higher level.

"Godly music is word-enriched and loaded with sound doctrine. Godly music packages Bible doctrines in memorable format" (Chris Starr).

### **The music must emphasize "melody" (Eph. 5:19).**

Melody is the simplest part of music. It is the basic tune. It is the part that can be sung and hummed and whistled.

A good melody reinforces the words and helps God's people remember the words and edify themselves with the words all during their days.

By emphasizing melody, God's Word is teaching us to keep the music simple so that it doesn't distract from the message of the words. There should be a good singable melody and the rest of the music should never overwhelm the melody. The music must never become so complicated or harmonic or loud that it drowns out the simple melody. In sacred music, a simple musical arrangement is superior to an overly complicated one.

### **The music must be spiritual and non-worldly in sound (Ro. 12:2; Eph. 4:17-19; 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pe. 2:11; 1 Jo. 2:15-16).**

"Spiritual" means set apart for God, different from the world. Spiritual is that which is under the control of the Spirit of God, as explained in the verse previous to Ephesians 5:19. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Spiritual is the opposite of carnal, fleshly. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Spiritual is the opposite of the unfruitful works of darkness that are mentioned in Ephesians 5:11. Spiritual is the opposite of worldliness.

Paul is saying that God's people are to sing songs that are holy, that are sacred, that are set apart for God, that are not carnal and fleshly, that are different in quality from the songs of the world, that are morally pure, that are of a heavenly flavor rather than a worldly.

The church's music will not sound like world's pop music and the music that the world uses for dancing and drinking and partying. The music of a holy God should contain no aspect of the world's sensual ways.

Some styles of music that we purposefully avoid are dance syncopation (e.g., the backbeat, beat anticipation), honky tonk styles (ragtime, boogie woogie, etc., that are popular in Southern Gospel), sensual vocal styles (e.g., scooping, sliding, breathiness, vocal fry), soft, overly emotional styles that are created by the wrong use of chords (e.g., unresolving chord cadences). The "soft sound" that weakens the power, dynamism, majesty, spiritual conviction, and militarism of sacred music.

We avoid the use of drums and electric guitars, because they are so totally identified with rock music and so easily used in a pop music fashion. (An exception is the use of drums in a timpani section of an orchestra.) (We must realize, of course, that rock can be played easily on a piano or an acoustic guitar.)

See "The Language of Music Styles" for a basic education on how to judge styles of music. This is one segment of *The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music*, a video series available at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).

### **The music must edify (1 Co. 14:26).**

"Edify" means to build up in the faith by means of hearing and understanding the truth of God's Word.

*All things being done unto edification means that sacred music must emphasize the message.* The message must be clear so that it speaks to the people's minds and hearts and thus edifies. Nothing must be allowed to detract from this. The musical instruments can be too loud and drown out the message. The music can also be so complex that it hinders the message. If the harmonies, for example, are so complex that the message is not clear, that is not good sacred music.

*All things being done unto edification means there is no place for entertainment in sacred music.* We want to purposefully and emphatically avoid anything that speaks of entertainment. This is why we do not applaud special music. This is why we don't use sensual vocal techniques that draw attention to the singer (scooping, sliding, breathiness, vocal fry). This is why we don't use video cameras to spotlight the singers and musicians and highlight them on video screens. These things are the way of performance and entertainment, not the way of true worship. It is carnally distracting.

*All things being done unto edification means that each song should be selected because of its message.* If the message is theologically wrong (e.g., "The Battle Hymn of the Republic") or weak (e.g., "Church in the Wild Wood"), there is no edification.

### **The music must not produce a charismatic style mystical experience ("be sober," 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8).**

Contemporary worship music is designed to create an emotional experience, a sensual experience, as opposed to a sacred music style that edifies through the understanding. Toward his end, contemporary musicians use music with a sensual dance rhythms, non-resolving chord cadences, repetition, electronic modulation, and other elements so that people will get carried away emotionally.

We reject any church music that is designed to create a highly emotional state or that produces any sort of hypnotic effect.

**The music must not borrow from and thus build bridges to the world of contemporary Christian music (Ro. 16:17-18; 1 Co. 10:21; 15:33; 2 Co. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 Ti. 3:5; Re. 18:4).**

Contemporary Christian Music is a major element of building the apostate one-world church and represents this world with all of its doctrinal, spiritual, and moral dangers

In former times, God's people were not in much danger of being influenced by the authors of songs and hymns. But the Internet has changed that dramatically. Now if a song is sung in a church, the people can go online and find the author and communicate quite intimately with him or her and his associates and his "world."

We reject any music that is written by contemporary musicians in order to avoid building bridges to these people and to their associates and to the dangerous ecumenical world that they represent.

**The music must aim excellence (Php. 1:10; 1 Co. 10:31).**

Everything about the church's music must be done on purpose, with biblical and spiritual wisdom, always aiming for the very best, the very highest, never satisfied with mediocrity, progressing in excellence. This is not for the glory of man, but for the glory of God.

We will aim for excellence in the standards for singers and musicians, in the selection of every song and hymn, in the conducting of every aspect of the song service, and in the quality of the singing and playing.

**The music must be unquestionably right and safe (1 Th. 5:21-22).**

To hold fast only that which is good, avoiding even the very appearance of evil is the highest possible standard for music. The standard is not just the bare minimum, not mediocrity, not borderline, not questionable in any way.

This is one reason why we avoid the use of drums and electric guitars. Even if they are used to play the right kind of sound, they are too intimately identified with rock music, and we want to avoid all such identity.

This is our fundamental music standard. If a song or hymn is questionable, we want to avoid it. If we aren't sure if it is right, sound, and healthy, we want to avoid it. There is a wealth of unquestionably sound, doctrinally correct, spiritual, non-worldly, non-charismatic music. To

avoid a piece of questionable music never harms a church, but using questionable music can definitely bring harm.

This is the standard of wisdom and safety.

**The music must avoid incrementalism (1 Co. 5:6; Ga. 5:9).**

When it comes to church music, little can be big. The wrong music usually enters a church gradually, not overnight. One way it enters is through specials, choruses, and youth ministries. When this happens, the church is doomed to continue moving away from spiritual and toward contemporary unless there is a dramatic move to stop the progression, which rarely happens.

**The music must be overseen by the pastors (Ac. 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pe. 5:2).**

The pastors will oversee the music themselves and/or they will appoint the *right people* to be in charge of the church's music. They will approve all special music.

## **SOME SPECIFIC MUSIC WE AVOID**

Townend-Getty (GTM)  
Sovereign Grace Music  
The Gaithers  
The Clarks  
Rejoice Music (Pensacola Christian College)  
Golden State Baptist College  
Champion Baptist College  
Lancaster Baptist Church and West Coast Baptist College  
Patch the Pirate  
Steve Pettit Team (now embracing GTM)

## **RESOURCES ON THE ISSUE OF SACRED MUSIC**

Way of Life Literature, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)  
*Baptist Music Wars* (free eBook)  
*Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians* (free eBook)  
*Marks of Good Song Leading* (free report)  
*Rock Music vs. the God of the Bible* (free eBook)  
*The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music* (free video series)  
*Suggested Music Recordings* (free report)  
*What Every Christian Should Know about Rock Music* (free eBook)

Music Education Ministries, [tbbc.org.au](http://tbbc.org.au)  
*Essential Theory of Rhythm*  
*The History of Western Music*  
*Music and Your Church*  
*The Rhythm of Rock*

*Sanctification and Your Music*

Music Fundamentals by Tim Kelly

<http://cbcstratton.com/media/2016-music-conference-with-pastor-tim-kelly/>

Majesty Music and Frank Garlock

*The Language of Music*

*Music in the Balance*

*The Language of Music*

*Pop Goes the Music*

(We must warn that Majesty Music and Frank Garlock are embracing Townend-Getty Music, which is a major change in philosophy, is a first step in the acceptance of contemporary music, and will probably reverse all of the much good they have done over the decades. See “Bob Jones, Majesty Music, New Reformed Calvinism, and the Gettys,” one of the presentations in *The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music*, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

Kent Brandenburg - *Sound Music or Sounding Brass: The Issue of Biblically Godly Music*

Tim Fisher - *The Battle for Christian Music and Harmony at Home: Straight Answers to Help you Build Healthy Music Standards*

Dan Lucarini - *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*

Ken Lynch - *Biblical Music in a Contemporary World* (out of print)

John Makulina - *Measuring the Music: Another Look at the Contemporary Christian Music Debate*

Kenneth Osbeck - *Singing with Understanding*

Gordon Sears - *Apostasy and Deception in Christian Music* (out of print)

H.T. Spence - *Confronting Contemporary Christian Music* (out of print)

N.A. Woychuk - *Singing Psalms with Isaac Watts and a Biography* (a good study of and presentation of Watts Psalter)

Living Hymns (first published by Al Smith in 1972, latest edition published by Striving Together Ministries)