

## Music and Worship as a Lifestyle Michael E. Simons

As Christians, we have been given a new heart by our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, to reflect and give praise concerning what He has done for us through salvation. For some of us, music is an exceptionally powerful way to give praise and thanks to Him. I'm such a person, and music has a powerful influence over me and takes a large space in my heart.

I was born and raised in an era when rock and roll was coming into its own as a musical genre. I have been exposed to many different styles of music, and because of that background, I have a great appreciation for many different styles and forms of music. Concerning my own personal preference, I enjoy music that has guitars, drums, and keyboards. I like bold, loud music, but I also appreciate the slower, more sensitive music that are typical elements of praise and worship that draw me into closer intimacy with my Lord. Here is how I view music in light of Scripture.

True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such persons the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

The phrase "such persons the Father seeks to be his worshippers" could be translated "such persons the Father requires, demands, or expects." Thus, worshipping in spirit and truth is the only worship that God will receive. As individuals and as a church, we must carefully evaluate every aspect of our private and corporate worship in the light of such clear teaching in order to be certain that we are "true worshippers."

Worship in spirit is worship that engages the spirit or the heart of a person. True worship flows from the inner dimension of a man and involves the intellect, the emotions, and the volition as illustrated in the following texts:

Psalm 45:1 -- My heart overflows with a good theme.

Psalm 103:1 -- Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name.

Psalm 51:17 -- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart,  
O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Romans 1:9 -- God whom I serve (worship) in my spirit.

Worship in spirit stands in stark contrast to worship that is ritual offered for show. Such worship is rejected and strongly condemned by God throughout Scripture (Isaiah 1:13,15; 29:13; Jeremiah 7:9-10; Matthew 15:7-9). The corporate worship of our church must be devoid of all such hypocrisy, deceit, or pretense. Worship "in spirit" will be characterized by earnest, sincere, authentic, and passionate expressions of love and adoration for our God.

Worship in truth is worship that occurs in response to God's gracious revelation of Himself in both creation (general revelation) and the Word of God (special revelation). True worship cannot occur apart from an understanding of who God is (Acts 17:23), and thus every aspect of worship must conform to the truth of God's Word. Each facet of our corporate worship must be carefully evaluated in the light of scriptural truth in order to protect and enable "worship in truth."

Worship that is saturated in Scripture will be protected from unworthy or errant thoughts about the object of our worship, God Himself. Biblically based worship will retain God and His glory as its central focus thus avoiding a man-centeredness. When scrutinized in the light of God's Word, worship will emphasize both the transcendence and immanence of God (Isaiah 57:15, Psalm 113). Worship submitted to the authority of God's word will insure that songs can accurately teach and admonish as commanded in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. Scriptural worship will balance the subjective expression of our thoughts to God (Psalm 18:1, 2) with the objective impression of God's thoughts to us (Deuteronomy 6:3; Isaiah 1:18-20).

Hebrews 13:15-16 teaches that "worship in truth" will bring glory to God not only through songs of the worshipper but also through the life of the worshipper: Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

This passage defines worship both in terms of praise on the lips and good works in the life (see also Matthew 5:16). In the New Testament, worship is expressed not only in terms of the singing of praise but good works such as personal evangelism (Romans 15:16), financial giving (Philippians 4:18), and any faithful act of obedience in the life of a believer (Romans 12:1-2, 14:13, 18; Psalm 95; I Corinthians 10:31).

Because music was created for His glory, (Isaiah 48:11; Romans 11:36), music should be used as a tool to facilitate worship, not as an end in itself. Music enhances our expression of adoration of God beyond that of the spoken word alone (Psalm 147:1).

To that end, I seek to help a church's educational ministry through a vibrant music ministry to further establish the Kingdom of God here on earth. Our music ought to be as bold as our message! It ought to be powerful and cutting, yet honest and refreshing; I believe that our music should be creative, anointed, capable of inspiring not just me and our worshippers, but all with whom we come in contact to a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus.

Our mission concerning the music ministry and the education of all our saints should be to show how to approach the throne of God boldly through worship so that all of us can discover who the Lord Jesus Christ really is, develop an intimate relationship with Him and ultimately live a lifestyle of worship. He really is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.

I believe that the old-fashioned hymns of the faith, as well as contemporary Christian music that focuses on the Lordship of Jesus Christ and our walk with Him, are wonderful tools to be used in deepening our Christian walk. I will use music that is Biblically based, theologically correct, and culturally relevant as a way of stirring up the gift that is in Christians, and is pleasing to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.