

Worship

God

In

Spirit & Truth

Is Singing Worship?

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Songs are expressions of feelings – love or hate, joy or sorrow, and spiritual or sensual. Songs and singing may be for one’s personal enjoyment, directed to a loved one, or to praise God. Songs are also teaching tools for committing beliefs, events and people to one’s memory.

Old Covenant Singing

“Come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms” (Psalm 95:1-2).

God instructed Moses “Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive [become affluent], they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant” (Deuteronomy 31:19-21).

“Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him [God] for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever’ ” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22).

In the Old Testament most of the singing references relate to expressions of praise and gratitude for God’s blessings, everlasting love and holiness.

New Covenant Singing

New Testament references to singing lets us know God’s New Covenant Children are to sing praises to Him from their heart, one’s inner being and to encourage one another by singing.

Colossians 3:12-17 – “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body [Jew and Gentile; master and slave; man and woman] you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly **as you teach and admonish one another** with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Ephesians 5:15-20 - Paul in writing to the Ephesian Christians states “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to one another [possibly responsive or

antiphonal singing] with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. **Singing and making music (melody) in your heart to the Lord**, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul tells the Colossian Christians that the singing emphasis is on one’s thought process as one expresses his feelings **toward God**. Paul does not specify the particulars about individual or assembled singing. Instead, he stresses an attitude of gratitude from one’s heart. Whatever the setting, one’s singing is to be directed toward the unity of the Body, teaching and encouraging someone and toward praising God is worship.

There are several components to singing and making melody or music in your heart to the Lord

- a) Singing – plucking of strings [of instruments, vocal cords or strings of heart]
- b) Making music in the heart – emotions and feelings with sincerity
- d) Unto the Lord –directed toward God
- e) Real and genuine, not feigned or fictitious but action taking place in the inner man, heart or soul, the part of man that loves and adores.
- f) One can sing to another person whether assembled or not.

Other New Testament scriptures that relate to singing

- “I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind” (1 Corinthians 14:12-17; 26)
- “Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise” (James 5:10-13)
- “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples” (Romans 15:7-11)
- “In the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises” (Hebrews 2:10-12)

Singing for enjoyment appeals to the outward man while singing from the heart reflects the feelings of the inner man. Therefore, whatever overrides the thoughts of the heart and becomes pleasing to the ear, whether harmony, instruments or chants, ceases to be pleasing to God.

A brief Review of singing. Who:

“Be filled with the Spirit. Singing and making music in your heart to the Lord - personal Where:

As an assembly:

In the midst of the assembly, I will **sing praise** to You

As individuals

Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God When:

Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise How:

I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

There are varied opinions as to what constitutes acceptable singing to God under the New Covenant. One must look beyond opinion or personal belief and interpret scripture consistently in its context, not arbitrarily.

Interpreting from a faulty premise produces faulty conclusions:

- a. Worship occurs in a 'worship service' so acceptable singing must occur in a 'worship service' assembly.
- b. Singing must be only chants or in unison since harmony focuses on sounding good to the hearer and is entertainment
- c. Only a cappella in unison or four-part harmony is acceptable
- d. If anyone has a song means the congregation selects songs to be sung
- e. Singing from one's heart in a cappella, chants, harmony or with instruments is acceptable unless the focus is on the sounds rather than thoughts of one's heart.
- f. Song leader or director is a performer
- g. Multiple song leaders, group leaders, or praise teams constitute entertainment even though as many participate with them as when only one song leader.
- h. Singing must be from memory without songbooks or projection on a screen.
- i. If one's focus is on the quality of sound it is entertainment whether with instruments, a cappella or in harmony.

Singing for entertainment occurs when one allows the enjoyment of singing and music to override the thoughts toward God from their heart whether it occurs – a) with or without musical instruments on radio, TV or CD, b) when assembled or alone or c) with no leader, one leader or multiple leaders. Of course, one can have great feelings of awe, reverence, honor and praise in worshipping God in song and at the same time enjoy and even be edified by the melody and music of other voices praising and worshipping God. **It is a heart matter.**

Questions

1. Singing under the Old Covenant was to teach a lesson and to express praise and thanks to God for His love.
 - True
 - False
2. The Colossian Christians sang to teach and admonish
 - True
 - False
3. Singing acceptable to God must always be from man's inner being, his heart.
 - True
 - False
4. Anything that prevents man's heart from focusing on his thoughts toward God while singing also prevents worship in song.

- True
- False

5. Singing from the heart is an individual matter even when one is assembled together as a church.

- True
- False

Answers to Questions

1. True 2.

True 3.

True 4.

True

5. True