



Sing the New Song

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Every time I sing, I think these thoughts: This is the only activity in the typical church service that we're still going to be doing in eternity. Someday the preaching will all be over. Someday the praying will all be over. Now we'll still be fellowshiping and worshiping, and that might include more than singing, but of the activities that we're used to in a typical congregational experience, this is the one we're going to do through all eternity. And so, we want to get it right while we're here.

Turn in your hymnal (*the hymnal used is The Christian Hymnary*) to "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah". This has long been high on the favorite list of our family. If you'll look at the date on that song, it takes us back about 200 years, to the country of Wales. I don't know how much you know about what happened there, but if you would have gone out early in the morning, every morning—this went on for years—you would see miners walking to work, and women walking to work, and they would be singing this song. If you were at a public meeting, the public meeting probably would not be closed until this song was sung. It practically became the national anthem of Wales, and was written by a man by the name of William Williams. Now we don't hear that much about

him, but he was very notable in his own country, at least as much in Wales as John Wesley was in England! He traveled about 95,000 miles by horse, and he was a little different from Wesley—he was a great singer. He was known as the "sweet singer of Wales" and wrote about 900 songs, all of them in Welsh. The interesting thing about that revival was he basically promoted it as a revival that was motivated and inspired by singing! Very little preaching was done in that revival. Often, if there was preaching done, in the middle of the sermon someone would burst into song, and they'd spend the rest of the evening singing! It was a singing revival, and the Spirit of God came down upon the country of Wales and changed the country—for almost a century it was not the same. Williams had a forty-year ministry, and he was an extremely influential person, but the power of his ministry was mostly the power of song, and the songs that he wrote. And so, this is indeed a very important subject.

Now I would like you to turn back 2,500 years. Let's go back to 2 Chronicles 20. Here we have a story that tells us about the tremendous power of song. I'm going to state up front my personal belief, and that is that



Music Brings us Right up into the Supernatural

The minute we start singing, we are on the verge of the supernatural world, be it the right world or the wrong one! That's why I think music is so terribly important, because when people are singing, they are starting to commune with spirits—either the Holy Spirit, and all the power that it represents, or the wrong kind of spirits, and all the power that they represent. You will recall that the nation of Judah was in terrible trouble. Jehoshaphat was their king, and the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites had come up against them—these were formidable enemies that the Israelites had not destroyed. God would not let the Israelites destroy these nations. Because of Israel's weakness, Judah would be attacked by these groups in times of weakness. Jehoshaphat got an army together, including the Syrians, the Israelites, and the people of Judah, and he proclaimed a fast. He stood up in the congregation as we read in verse 6 and said:

"O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen, and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee" and then he reminded God of His promise, that if they ever got into trouble, and they came and prayed in His sanctuary, that he would hear, and this is what he prayed: *"Art not thou, our God,*

who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land for thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever, and they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying when evil cometh upon us, as the word, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

Verse 12: *"O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what*

to do: but our eyes are upon thee." And then Jahaziel, one of the sons of Asaph, who was a singer, and a Levite, stood up and said *don't you be dismayed about this great multitude. The battle is not yours, it's the Lord's and you shall not need to fight in this battle.* Verse 17: *"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."* And they all worshipped. Now, let me define the word worship. Worship is not getting together and making a lot of exciting noises. Worship is not something we do primarily on Sunday mornings. Worship is not even something primarily we



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do when we're singing. The word worship comes from the Old English word *worthship*. We only worship whenever by our entire life we demonstrate that God is worth more to us than anything else! And then if we come together and



our singing is part and parcel of what we have demonstrated by word and deed throughout the week, then we worship! But if this is disconnected from what you were doing over the past six days, then you were not worshipping this morning! We only worship when we have demonstrated that God is the highest thing on our list of priorities. You worship all week, and you do it here when you sing. So these people worshipped, and then the Levites stood up to praise the Lord with a loud voice. Are you aware that there were four thousand paid musicians in Israel? It was a paid position. Four thousand people were paid to full-time worship the Lord in song. That's how important it was to God. Out of those four thousand people (you can read this in I Chronicles 23:5 and 1 Chr. 25:1 and 7) 288 of them were especially trained to go out and teach all of the people of the land to sing. This gives us some idea of how important music is to God! I imagine that when the Levites sang that it became very evident that the most powerful thing they could do the next morning was to sing! And so the next morning, Joshua was still so inspired by those Levites and their singing that he put those singers right in front of the army and they marched into battle singing. And the Lord sent ambushments against Moab, Edom, and Ammon. They got confused, and they started killing each other until they were all dead! That must have been an amazing sight for these people to stand there and watch this battle being won without having to lift a sword! And on they go with their song! I think it got louder and louder! All the people had to do was gather up the spoil! It took them three days, and it tells you that they couldn't even carry it all!

This was indeed an amazing experience—I wish I could have been there! But brothers and sisters, we've been there. I don't know what you do when the battle is hard, I don't know what you do when you're sorely tempted, I don't know what you do when you're opposed, and bitterly accused, and the devil's right there with discouragement. I'll tell you what I do: I sing. And you'll see the same thing happen. You'll see ambushments, and you'll see the enemy defeat

its own self and leave the field. **Singing is a powerful weapon!** It is a tremendous resource that God has given every one of us, and I think this is why it is such a tragedy if there's somebody who cannot sing, or if can, they will not sing! There's nothing we have at our disposal that is more strategically powerful than song. I remember John Risser, a godly bishop who used to preach in our community frequently, stood in one of our pulpits, and very sadly said, "Beware of the person who has no song." Now he didn't mean a person that could not sing beautifully, but a person that doesn't have that song of praise welling up (even if they cannot sing in tune) out of their hearts, in every situation of life.

I chose that story to introduce the idea that in worship, and in songs of worship, there is supernatural power! I want to convince you that the most powerful thing you can do, through the next week, and through your entire life is to sing, in true worship—whether it's the revival in Wales, or it's this deliverance we just read about in Israel, we find that there is supernatural power in true songs of worship, especially in difficult situations. Remember Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi—how they were thrust into the inner part of the prison, and into those stocks with their backs bleeding. They began to sing, and the foundations of the prison shook! And all the doors were open, but there was something more amazing that happened that day than that! Not one prisoner got up and left. Have you ever noticed that? Note that when the jailer came, and was scared to death for his own life, Paul says, "We're all here!" To me that's the most amazing miracle—you have a prison with all the gates open, and everyone's chains loose, and everyone just sits there! Paul and Silas' song had that whole situation, even the human element, under complete control. I told you, there's supernatural power in song!

Nehemiah 8:10 says "*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*" Psalm 22:3 says "*O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" Song puts you right upon the edge of the spiritual world, and when you start to sing, Christ comes right into your song, and He's there. Are you ever in



a situation in life in which you don't feel as if God's presence is very real? It's never failed for me—singing makes God's presence very real in my life. My mother was one of the most cheerful people I had ever met in my life, and she was one of the most victorious people that I knew in my life. And I think I know why—she spent almost all her time singing. I know most of the hymns in our hymnal by heart because she sang them, and that's where I learned them. She knew them by heart. It was a tremendous experience to grow up with a mother who spent all her time singing. No wonder she was so happy! Everybody in the family will tell you that my mother was one of the most joyful and cheerful persons that our family ever knew. She had her down times, but by and large, she was a happy person, and I think it had to do with the fact that she spent a lot of her life singing. She couldn't read a note and couldn't sing a part, and was not a great musical person, but she loved to sing! And I want to tell you something, mothers, the best thing you could do for your children is to sing! And fathers too, for that matter! It will bring God's presence right into your home! It will make it very real to your children! They'll never know what it's like to grow up without a song! (It's the best ear training, by the way, that you could give your children, and they have to have ear training if they are going to learn to sing.) I want everybody to leave the congregation this morning determined that song is going to be a prominent part of their everyday experience.

I want to show you another reason why I believe that singing opens us up to the world of the spiritual. Turn to 2 Kings 3. In this incident, Moab had come up to attack Judah. Judah had then gotten Israel and Edom together to fight against Moab, and when they went out to fight, they ran out of water! They were in dire trouble. Somebody remembered to call on Elisha. Look at verse 15: "But now bring me a minstrel. (This is Elisha, the great prophet! How did he make contact with God for the help these people needed? Music!) And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came

upon him." And he said, "Make this valley full of ditches." And you know what happened—they made the valley full of ditches, and it didn't even rain, but the next morning, the ditches were full of water (though it didn't rain the night before) and they looked like blood—then these Moabites got afraid, and so they fled. And these people ran after them, and attacked them from behind, and slew many of them—again, a great victory. But I want to point out: even Elisha knew that the very best contact he could make with God was through music! When I study this subject, I wonder why this resource is so neglected! I understand why when the church goes into apostasy; one of the first things the devil takes from them is there song! He knows (if we don't know it, he does) that that's our most powerful weapon! And when churches are in apostasy, they are without a song! The devil loves it, because they have just thrown aside the most powerful weapon they have to fight against him. Turn to 1 Chronicles 25:1. "Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals"—Isn't that interesting! We often talk about prophesying—Paul says he would that every person would prophesy; well here is something maybe we should take into consideration! These people prophesied with music! It was the key to the best insight they could get into the will of God! No wonder it says in Psalm 89:15: "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: They shall walk O Lord in the light of thy countenance." Music gives us prophecy. It gives us direction! So the next time that somebody comes to you and says, brother, I'm having trouble finding direction in life, your answer should be: Sing brother, sing! Many is the time that I've found myself confused and frustrated, and singing cleared it, and God's will became clear to me, and I was able to walk in the light of His countenance!

Songs of true worship are associated with power, and they always were associated afterward with the most powerful things that hap-



pened in the Bible. We have the song of Moses in Exodus 15, right after the Red Sea. Deborah, and Barak, after their victory over Hazor, and Sisera, in Judges 5, you find a very interesting song—you don't find out what happened in that battle until you read the song! You just find out that Sisera was defeated, he came running and Jael drove a tent peg through his head. That's all you find out, but if you have the song you find out what happened as Sisera was up there on the mountain he had chariots—Israel didn't have chariots, they were foot soldiers—and they were there in the valley, and they were scared to death of chariots because these chariots were made of iron, and they usually had swords fastened to there axles, and someone could just come swooping down through a bunch of foot soldiers and saw off their legs with those chariots, and so Israel was terrified of those chariots, but God had told them not to have chariots. So here they were, standing in the valley, and Sisera says this is a piece of cake. He thought he would just swoop down off this mountain, and they were all going to look like grass lying on the ground. But what he didn't count on was up the valley at the river, God sent a huge thunderstorm. By the time Sisera got down off the mountain into the valley the river had overflowed and the valley was mud! His chariots got stuck and the wheels came off! The children of Israel pursued the people, and killed them, one after another. In fact the Bible says the stars fought against this poor man! But it was associated here with song! The last words of Moses were two beautiful songs outlining the attributes of God and his wonders among them, and ends with some pretty severe judgments that were all in the song, and the second one was a song basically of blessing upon these people, tribe by tribe. Let me put in a little comment: Those songs were more than just five words projected upon a wall sung fifty times. Seven-Eleven songs, I call them: seven words sung eleven times. We have good examples in the Scripture as to what God calls songs! They have content! They tell us something! Now we can sing Alleluia, Alleluia, and I'm sure we'll do a lot of that in heaven too, but I don't want to

sing that all Sunday, every Sunday. It's okay occasionally, but most of our singing should be instructing our minds, and inspiring our hearts, and saying something of worth, about what we believe about God, and understanding his will for our lives! Some other incidents: Christ sang before going to Gethsemane. I think he did it for the same reason we've been talking about. I think it was one of the weapons that he took in his grasp, when he marched out to that dreadful death! He knew he needed this! Luther's enemies said he's done more harm with his songs than with any of his sermons. The Anabaptists sang at the stake—the witness of those people singing in the most inhumane and unbelievable circumstances was so effective that they finally had to execute them secretly because the song of these people was so powerful and so effective. The Wesley revivals were carried along by song as well as were the Moravian revivals.

Well, my first point was that music is associated with supernatural power. It's one of the most important and one of the most crucial weapons that you and I have. The second point I'd like to make is:

Music is Important to God

I want you to turn to an interesting Scripture in Zephaniah 3:17. Speaking to the future glorification of Israel, it says, "*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.*" I can't wait to hear that! Can you imagine what it must sound like when God sings! No wonder we are supposed to sing. We are made in His image and He is a singer! **God is a singer!** And he left us with a tremendous witness to that! There are over three hundred references in the Bible to song, urging us to sing unto the Lord! It doesn't say that this is a suggestion—it's a command! But like all of God's commands, we love them! They're not grievous! And, of course, we have a whole book of the Bible devoted to nothing but songs! Psalm 33:3—"*Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.*" Now the Bible talks repeated-



ly about this new song. That tells me something about music. **Music is NOT amoral.** Before people are converted, they sing a song, and when they are converted, they sing a different song! He says, sing a NEW song! Psalm 40:1-3—*“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear (just like in the days of Jehoshaphat), and shall trust in the Lord.”* Do you want to evangelize? Psalm 96:1: (three times He tells us to sing here) *“O Sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.”* Psalm 98:1 *“O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.”* Psalm 144:9— *“I will sing a new song unto thee, O god: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.”* **So what is this new song about?** Well, if you look at all these references, it’s always about God’s mighty works, especially his work of salvation and deliverance! The word “salvation” means “to salvage”, to bring a person out of a bad situation into a good situation. In fact, that’s what most of the Psalms are about. Many of the Psalms follow a pattern—they start out with a problem, and they end up with praise. So the psalmist starts out by saying you have ransacked me, you have searched me, I can’t handle this, Lord—I can’t get away, I can’t do anything about it! You know everything I’m thinking and everything I’m doing—you know my words before I say them and I can’t handle this kind of scrutiny! And then, in the middle of the psalm, he starts to contemplate God (and here’s the worship), who God really is, and he realizes that when God sees a problem, he begins to salvage; so if he sees a mistake in your life, he doesn’t clobber you—he starts to redeem! When the psalmist realizes that, see how he ends the psalm: Ransack me God, and know my heart! And see if there be any wicked way in me! When in the beginning, he didn’t want the Lord to see

that, in the end, he says: please, ransack me and see if there be any wicked way in my life, and lead me in the way everlasting. Praise all the way through! For God’s salvation! Psalm 96: *“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name: shew forth His salvation from day to day.”* So that’s what we’re going to do! We’re going to sing the mighty delivering power of God in our lives! So what else is going to be the content of our songs? Verse three says, *“Declare his glory among the heathen”*. It’s going to be a description of God’s magnificent character! Glory, as I understand it, is an expression of excellence. We talk about the glory of a sunset, and we mean that nothing could be added to it—it’s already perfect. And that’s what we sing about—we sing about the excellence of God’s characteristics. One of the reasons that it’s so necessary in our day is that most people have a very pitiful, pitiful concept of God. And we need to tell the world about His magnificent character! They need to hear that. Sing and declare His glory! Then he goes on to say, *“For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”*: We should tell the whole world that we have been made whole—that’s beautiful!

After 9/11, I began contemplating other religions of the world, and I made an amazing discovery that I should have known before. I always had the impression that the heathen gods promised something that couldn’t deliver. And then all of a sudden it struck me: They don’t even offer it! It’s not that they offer it and can’t deliver—they don’t even offer it! Mohammed doesn’t offer an agent that cleanses sin! Islam says, that if you keep the month of Ramadan (sic) by fasting during the day, and you make a pilgrimage to Mecca, and you pray five times a day (and there are two other ones



which I can never remember) when you meet Allah, you just might incur his favor, but you can't be sure. In fact, if you want to witness to a Muslim, say to them, "Is Allah holy?" "Why yes!" "Are you holy?" "No." "How do you hope stand in Allah's presence someday? And they will be speechless! They have no blood! Declare this to the heathen, who are scared to death of their gods! You better start singing—They don't know that there is one god and he has offered an agent to cleanse them of their sin! They don't know it! "Rock of ages, cleft for me—Let me hide myself in thee. Let the water and the blood, from thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure! Save from wrath and keep me pure! Cleanse me from its guilt and its power!" What an offer! Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Demonstrate to the world the effect of that blood, and what it has done for you in your life!

Let's turn to Psalm 100 in bringing this to conclusion. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." The whole earth is called to praise. "Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing." When you went into the presence of a king, in those days, you always brought a present that had the greatest value of any gift you could accumulate. When the wise men came to Christ, they brought very expensive gifts. There are people that go charging into God's presence without any gift! That won't do—He's a great king! You can't come into His presence without a gift! What gift does He want? A heartfelt song! The heathen come into the presence of their gods with dread and fear—we're commanded to serve a good God with gladness! "No good thing will withhold from them that walk uprightly!" So we come with our gifts of praise with joy. "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

It's not that we don't have enough to praise Him about, is it?

What Makes Good, Godly Music? What Makes Worldly Music? Is There Really a Difference?

I Chronicles 12:32—"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment." We need these men today, in an age when most Christians do not know that the gospel and entertainment are incompatible. Many do not understand that those two are the antithesis of each other. The word "muse" means to think, or to meditate. "Amuse" means **not** to think or to meditate, much like "amoral" means not moral or "atypical" means not typical. The church once sang "We Stand Amazed in the Presence." The modern church might as well sing "I Stand Amused in the Presence." You simply don't dwell in God's presence that way. We have people today that believe that worship is synonymous with excitement! In reality, worship is often very quiet. Sometimes, it's exuberant—but excitement doesn't equate with worship. If we're going to go down the road of contemporary music, down the road we'll have worship teams leading our services, and we'll have instrumental music—especially percussion. Wouldn't it be sad if, in twenty years, we find ourselves somewhere where we don't want to be?

Music is a very powerful thing—**even the heathen knew this**. Socrates said, "Let us write the words to the music of our nation, and we care not who writes its laws," saying in effect that it would be the words and songs that people would sing and hear in Greece that would determine what would happen to the nation. In fact, David at one time said something similar—he said, "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage!" Listen to this text:

My God, I thank thee, who has made the earth so bright, so full of splendor and of joy, beauty and light. So many glorious things are here, noble and right.



*I thank Thee, too, that Thou hast made joy to abound.
So many joyful thoughts and deeds circling us round,
that in the darkest spot of earth, some love is found.*

*I thank Thee more that all our joy is touched with
pain, that shadows fall on brightest hours—that thorns
remain; so that earth's bliss may be our guide and not
our chain.*

*I thank thee Lord, that Thou hast kept the best in
store; we have enough, yet not too much to long for
more, a yearning for a deeper peace not known before.*

*I thank thee Lord, that here our souls though amply
blessed can never find, although they seek a perfect
rest, nor ever shall, until they lean on Jesus' breast.*

I challenge you to find a contemporary song that says something like that. The author died in her thirties—I suspect that she was sick all her life—and this is her testimony. And if you have people singing those types of songs, you're going to have a certain kind of people. They will be a people that know how to face pain, and know how to rejoice in sorrow, and know the value of shadows, and the things in life that people normally don't choose.

So you see why Socrates said what he did. His student Plato said this: "The introduction of a new type of music must be shunned, as endangering the whole state. Because of the styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most political institution." His student, Aristotle, said this: "Music directly represents the passions or states of the soul: gentleness, anger, courage, temperance. If one listens to the wrong type of music, he will become the wrong kind of person, and vice versa."

Now these are not Christians! These are Greeks!

Why is music so powerful? Music addresses the whole being. It actually transcends even the conscious thought and reaches the deepest part of our being, which is our desire. When the Hebrews talked about the heart, they always considered it the seat of desire. And your desire is the deepest part of your being. Music goes

straight to the heart, the root of your desires. That's why Proverbs says, "Keep thy heart will all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Schumann, the composer, said, "Music is the perfect expression of the soul. Whatever is inside a person will be evidenced finally in his music." One particular heathen culture has music with floating melodies that never have any resolution or ending—it's much like the New Age music of today. The reason for this: their basic concept of life is that life goes in circles, with no ending in sight. It's not fitting for Christians to sing this type of music, because we know that life isn't that way—things are all going somewhere. Another heathen culture has pulsating, chanting rhythms that show the restless emotions of the heathen heart. Contemporary music, with very few exceptions lacks a sense of direction, is in many cases atonal (without a real sense of harmony), and has rhythms that introduce misdirection into the song. But as we said, the new birth should give us a new song. The Christian should have a distinctive kind of song, and shouldn't be borrowed from another source. Even the songs that Anabaptists used as tunes for their songs were of a generally moral culture heavily influenced by Western civilization, which was heavily influenced by Christianity. Even the folk music of the culture was good, sound music.

Turn to I Samuel 16:22-23. This passage tells us what David's music did for Saul when an evil spirit troubled him:

"And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed (the word literally means he physically breathed easier), and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

So we see from this passage that music affects us **physically**. We also know that rock music affects 9 out of 10 people in weakening muscle tone. This is because rock music is the



exact opposite of the rhythm of the beating heart. The heartbeat is a long, a short and a pause. Rock music is short, short, long, pause. It sets up a conflict in the normal rhythms of the body.

We also see from this passage that music affects us **mentally**. Did you know that department stores and grocery stores play music in their stores that makes their customer more disposed to buy whatever products the store offered?

Finally, we see that music affects us in a **spiritual way**—“the evil spirit departed from him.” Demons are uncomfortable around certain kinds of music! (That’s the kind of music that I want!) On the other hands, demons are seemingly very comfortable with other types of music! Halley’s says that congregational singing, next to the Bible and Bible teaching, is the best feature of a religious service, and one of the most effective ways to preach the gospel.

Here are some dynamics of good music:

1. Good music has a varied, repetitious, and dominant melody, with a variety of chords. Bad music has monotonous and fragmented melody with no direction and/or resolution and constantly repeated chords with no variety.

Did you know that for years, the church sang no harmony or used any instruments? They sang only the melody. That’s where the definition of music needs to rest—any harmony must have a variety of chord changes. Both repetition and variation are important in music, in speaking, in architecture—because it keeps the attention of the listener. Repetition without variation will bore the listener, and no repetition will make it hard for the listener to keep focused.

2. Good music has varied levels of intensity, but is always under control. Bad music is unrestrained—it’s just one long, loud noise.

You can hear it coming down the road, even in a car with the windows up!

3. Good music has varied and accurate rhythms. Bad music has unvaried repetition of a rhythmic pattern, with unnatural accents that dominate the song.

In other words: Good music has a dominant melody, harmony that supports the melody, and rhythm that supports both. Compare this to what the world gives us: music with very little melody, with some harmony, but heavy, heavy rhythm.

Thoughts from the Question-and-Answer Session

(About the use of musical instruments in worship) The phrase “a capella” means “of the church”—a description of the unaccompanied song that was the standard part of the church in centuries past. While musical instruments have a purpose for education and wholesome recreation, the purest form of worship is unaccompanied song. The presence of instruments makes it more difficult to discern music for worship and music for entertainment purposes. Saints from all centuries of church history speak against the presence of instrumental music in worship.

Psalms 149:6, “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.” In many instances the Lord has used the singing of believers to turn back those seeking to rob non-resistant Christians. Also many Christians, especially overseas missionaries, used singing as a weapon in fighting off demonic influence.

There is a danger, in our world of tape recorders and CD’s, of getting so absorbed in listening to music that we neglect singing ourselves and getting the greater benefit. □

