



tion will always trump man's standard, and since God has not deemed aesthetics and musical theory to be essential in worship then neither should we.

apply to our singing as well. Were churches able to sing "decently and in order" before there were shape notes, musical scales, and key signatures? Of course, and they were expected to. No one denies the value or the beauty that can be achieved with musical notation and four-part harmonies. Such things are also of tremendous value in aiding the order of song and allow us to blend our voices in unison more easily. However, based on the Scripture's teaching, such things must ever retain their status as *non-essentials*. God's crite-

Someone may well object saying, "But we have to do our *best*, when we worship God!" I couldn't agree more, but I would add that "best" has to be defined by God, not by us. We may take great pleasure and pride in being on key or our ability to sight-read notes. If we are capable of utilizing those things to glorify God then we should. Not all Christians are able to do so, and such things should not be expected of them. In the same way, not all Christians who teach or preach are trained to use computerized visual aids, or audio setups for microphones and speakers etc. Those who are, however, should use those talents to glorify God and further His Gospel. We must not judge what is "best" by our own abilities and expectations. Instead, let us always seek to offer God what He desires without mingling His terms with our own expectations and pre-conceived notions of what *we* consider to be "beautiful music" (cf. Is. 55:9).



*For a more detailed discussion regarding this topic see my article, "Instrumental Music—What's the Big Deal?" *Faithful Sayings* 13.11 (March 13, 2011).

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ISSUE

13.31

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

July 31
2011

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Singing Praises to God

By Jason Garcia

Without a doubt there is no instruction or command in the New Testament to praise God with mechanical instruments (guitars, pianos, drums, etc.)* However, there is another danger of which we should equally be wary—treating musical aids as *necessities*. Let's begin by asking "Is there anything wrong with using aids (pitch pipes, songbooks, etc.) to help us sing in a more orderly manner?" Absolutely not, because all such things fall within the realm of Scriptural authority and can make a song service flow more smoothly (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We have every reason to be thankful for the assistance of things like songbooks, written music, and brethren with the knowledge to employ and teach these things effectively. Truly, all the church can be blessed by such people who use their knowledge of music not only to lead song services, but to write new hymns with which to praise God and enjoy. Sadly though, in some churches so much emphasis is placed on proper pitch, tempo, finding your part in the chorus, or other technicalities of vocal music that these aids can come to be viewed as necessary to worship. While these expedients can help facilitate orderly worship, they must be seen with the right perspective and appreciated for what they are—tools, *not* requirements. We can easily find ourselves so encumbered by these details that we fail to remember their proper place, and per-

haps even allow ourselves to adopt a condescending attitude toward others because they do not share our concern for such details. Is there anything within God's Word that demands we should be concerned about such musical technicalities? No. We must remind ourselves of God's criterion for acceptable praise. Let us consider this question: "What is it that *He* desires when we worship Him in song?"

1. Worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Do you recall Jesus' words to the



woman at the well? She sought to justify her way of worship, but the Lord told her that **"you worship what you do not know"** (John 4:22 NASB). Jesus then added, **"...an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers"** (John 4:23). In this passage, what does the Lord teach is essential for worshipping God? Sincerity is named first—worship should spring genuinely from the heart of man, from his *spirit*. Furthermore, worship is to be done "in truth"—on God's terms, guided and regulated by His Word. Could these two things be accomplished without implementing things like shape notes, pitch pipes, or even hymnals? Absolutely. Again, that isn't to say that such aids aren't helpful, but simply that they are not *necessary*. Thus, we should be cautious about overemphasizing them.

2. Sing with the Mind.

What else has God required of us in singing praises to Him? Paul gives us part of our answer when in his first letter to the church at Corinth. He writes, **"What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also"** (1 Cor. 14:15 ESV). When Paul asks, "What am I to do?" he is offering the solution to the matter under consideration within the context, namely, that the local church there had become more concerned with demonstrating their spiritual gifts than building up or encouraging one another. Such a mentality had led to members speaking or singing in different languages that could not be understood by all in the assembly. While such miraculous gifts have now ceased, the principle that Paul teaches is still applicable today. What is the apostle teaching? Clearly, his mind was to be as engaged in worship as his spirit. He strove to worship in spirit as he mentions here, demonstrating that his heart and affections were involved during worship, but gives an additional exhortation (with God's authority). He says that he will pray and sing with his *mind* as well. What good would it be to our

brethren if we were loudly and passionately praising God, but our words weren't understandable? We must use our God-given intellect and strive in our speech and song to make worship intelligible to all, so that all may benefit from the words spoken or sung. Can this still be accomplished without being on key or hitting every note? We must assume so since no mention is made of such things in this context or elsewhere.

3. Teach and Admonish in Song.

The Spirit commands us to **"teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God"** (Col. 3:16). We must remember that it is possible to fulfill this command as well without the aids we so commonly use. Were churches able to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" before the advent of the songbook? Certainly, and there are many that still do. This passage gives us another guideline that will most likely seem obvious, but nevertheless some churches have decided to ignore it. The only types of songs that are pleasing to God are those that are spiritual which include hymns and psalms. While this may be readily apparent to us, some congregations have no qualms about singing "pop" songs or "patriotic" songs simply because they *mention* God. Brethren, let us be diligent that we do not fall into the same trap. We must remember that simply because we find a song included within a hymnal does not mean it is doctrinally sound, appropriate in worshipping God, or even useful to teach one another.

4. Worship Decently and Orderly.

Let's consider one final admonition from Paul with regard to our worship in general. In the same passage regarding singing with the mind, Paul says, **"...all things should be done**

decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). There may well be many different Scriptural customs within different churches around the world, that all adhere to this underlying principle allowing brethren to conduct their worship "decently and in order". Some sing with harmonies and some without. Some sing using the western musical scale, while others are content using scales without harmonic intervals. Nevertheless, they can all worship with reverence and order. Whatever role we find ourselves in during worship it must be done with the gravity and composure appropriate to the occasion of worshipping the Creator of the universe and Savior of mankind. Perhaps we should challenge ourselves to bear Jesus' words in mind when we assemble. He has said, **"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them"** (Matt. 18:20). Since Paul's command to do all things "decently and in order" applies to all aspects of worship in the assembly, it must