

Assessing the Value of a Song in the Believer's Life

Why care?

Music can have a powerful impact upon our minds and hearts, either for good or bad, encouraging a disciple either in the way of the spirit or the flesh, depending upon the song. Discernment is needed therefore, including a simple means to evaluate the value of the music we choose to listen to and participate in. Because of the ease at which music can fill our minds with thoughts (either good or evil) care should be taken in the evaluation process; it should not be left to personal preference or to chance.

The role and place of music...

The music to place at the foundation of our discipleship is music that is spiritually uplifting and strengthens our spiritual outlook and resolve to live godly lives. Such music is rooted in praise to God and celebrates our unique hope in Christ Jesus and the Kingdom that is coming. It invigorates our walk in the spirit while exposing the dangers of the flesh. Encouragement is found either on an individual or communal level. It invigorates our discipleship when it fills our hearts and minds with its eternal principles, due to its clear basis in the Word.

Some music, while weak from a spiritual perspective, may yet be helpful and enjoyable in a recreational capacity. A good deal of music can be appreciated and enjoyed purely due to its musical merits.

Some music should be avoided at all times and in all circumstances because it is blasphemous to God's holy and righteous ways by promoting ungodly thinking and conduct. This type of music includes profanity, false doctrine, and/or condones what God defines as immoral behaviour.

All music falls somewhere on a continuum – some clearly positive, some clearly negative, and much music somewhere in between. Where a clear judgement cannot be determined, a song's place on the musical spectrum - and as a result, its appropriateness in one's life - must be adjudged on the principles of conscience-based decision making, using divine principles as the guide.

The questions on the second page of this document are designed as an aid to those seeking to assess and filter the music in their lives. No method can perfectly determine the appropriateness of all music for either worship or pleasure; however, when applied/answered honestly, the following evaluation process will assist the listener in choosing the most beneficial music, and excluding music which is clearly unsuitable in the life of a saint.

THE BLACK AND WHITE STANDARD

If you answer cannot answer 'yes' to all of the following three questions, the song has no place in the ears or life of a saint, and no further questions need be considered in the filtering process.

- The song is free from profanity or inappropriate language.
- The song is free from either explicit or implicit reference to immoral/ungodly behavior.
- The song is free from false doctrine.

Music which has passed the first test may be suitable for spiritual or recreational benefit. The strength of a song's *spiritual soundness* will be determined by the number of positive responses to the following questions. Music that meets the greatest number of criteria should form the core of our discipleship; our conscience must determine the place of other music in our lives.

A Measure for All Music (spiritual AND recreational)

1. Is the song free from questionable association due to (eg) its musical style, artist, image etc.?

- The song is pleasurable to listen to and has a **positive impact** on my life/mood/meditation, etc.
- The **musical style** of the song is **not strongly associated** with questionable music genres. **1 Thess. 5:22**
- The artist does not **broadcast immoral** lifestyle/image/values? **Rom. 1:32**
- If the song has lyrics, the **lyrics** are consistent with the spirit of **Phil. 4:8**.
- I can profess to be **separate** from the world's popular entertainment while using this song. **2 Co. 6:17**

A Measure for Spiritual Music

2. Does it teach God's distinctive truth in a meaningful way while protecting against immorality and apostasy?

(1 Chron 16:4; 25:1-2; Col 3:16; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:18-19; Ps 47:7)

- Can the lyrics be linked to **Bible teachings**, principles or themes? **Col. 3:16**
- Do the lyrics **reflect truth** in a clear manner, **free from ambiguity**? **Psa. 47:7**.
- Do the lyrics display a **reverential tone**, consistent with the **spirit of prayer**, particularly when addressing the Almighty? **Heb. 12:18**
- Is our **unique understanding** of the truth represented? **Col. 3:16**
- Is the music **compatible** with the lyrics, enhancing the message of the lyrics given the particular kind of emphasis (e.g. the mood – joyful, solemn, majestic, etc...)?

3. Does it thank, glorify, praise and honour God as the focus of our worship:

- For (eg) **His greatness, lovingkindness, glory, wondrous works, covenant, purpose, holy name, salvation,**
- and compel us to seek him, to fear him and to worship him, for He is good and His mercy endureth forever?**

(Ex 15:2; Ps 9:2; 13:6; 27:6; 28:7; 50:14, 23; 68:4; 118:14; Isa 12:2; Eph 5:20; Heb 13:15. **Cp.** also the national anthem of worship (the model hymn) written by the Spirit through David (1 Chron 16:7-35))

4. Does it encourage a disciple unto greater levels of holiness, godliness and faithful obedience in their battle against sin? (2 Chron. 20, Col. 3:16)

- Does it help in the **transformation process** (from walking after the flesh to walking after the spirit)?
- Does it **encourage sanctification** (being holy/separate) in this life and **preparation for the life to come**?
- Does it draw a person **closer to God** (and things eternal) and **away from Sin** (things temporal)?
- The lyrics **engage the mind and heart** as a result of their **meaningful spiritual content**? **1 Cor. 14:15**
- Do the lyrics **stimulate spiritual reflection** and contemplation of truth? **Psa. 42:8**
- If the song is intended for **communal** use, it does not dwell on **self and individual experience**. **Psa. 47:7**