

THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF MUSIC

Why God Created Music

When God created all things, He also created music. One evidence of this is that the Lord created the first musical instruments. People can sing, whistle, and clap because God has placed the proper musical equipment inside us! The birds and animals also make music because of the musical instruments and abilities that God has given them. Around the world, in the skies, and even throughout the seas, living creatures are filling our planet with music.

God created music for it to be a medium or channel of communication. Not only people, but also the birds and animals communicate many messages through music, such as courtship, danger, aggression, and even sympathy. For example, I can remember one evening when a car ran over a dog in our neighborhood. As this dog let out his last dying yelps, all the dogs in the community began an unusually mournful howling. In essence, they were singing a funeral dirge! Music is commonly used by all kinds of living creatures to communicate with each other—it is only humans that also use words.

A musician combines sounds to bring a message through a song just as an artist combines colors to communicate a message through a picture. However, music is a more popular and more powerful medium than art. The great 19th century conqueror of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte, recognized this when he said, “Of all the arts, music has the greatest influence over the emotions and is the art to which leaders should give great attention.” Moreover, music has an appeal that goes much beyond our emotions because relates to our entire human nature. For just as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 suggests that humanity was created with a triune nature, we can also see how music can communicate to each part of the entire person in his or her *spirit*, *soul*, and *body*.

Music is a Spiritual Channel

Godly music can stir up and release the moving of the Holy Spirit from our heart, or *spirit*. We can read in 1 Samuel 16:23 that when David played his harp, it released such an anointing that the evil spirit oppressing King Saul was driven away. Music can also help to release gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy. It is a special blessing to the musicians and singers in a church service when the moving of the Holy Spirit is released through their music to minister in such ways as to bring healings, prophecy, deliverance, or the conviction of sin.

One special time when I saw a powerful release of the Holy Spirit happened when I was a musician in a choir. As we sang about heaven at the funeral of a godly man, a wonderful anointing came upon us. Waves of the Holy Spirit seemed to flow through us as we played and sang, and a number of the singers saw the glory of God filling the room. The mighty presence of God brought such conviction that some unbelievers who had come to attend the funeral jumped up at that moment, put their fingers in their ears, and ran out of the service as if they were in agony! However, many who remained had their lives changed by the power of the Holy Spirit that day.

On another occasion, I was conducting a pastors’ seminar in Baguio, a popular tourist city in the Cordillera Mountains in the Philippines. During the seminar we had some unusual spiritual breakthroughs into high worship. I told the pastors that we would see visible results from these times of worship.

A few days later the vice-president of our ministry led a man to Christ who was the owner of the largest group of prostitution houses in Baguio. He immediately closed them down and had some of the pastors who attended our seminar burn his many idols. Then he put up signs outside of the former prostitution houses that read: “This house is closed—Jesus is Lord.” I believe that it was through the power of worship that this victory was first gained in the heavenlies, although through evangelism it was then accomplished upon the earth.

God made music to be a channel of the Holy Spirit, but it can also be used by Satan. Heathen religions use music to call evil spirits. Their music can help prepare a person to become demon possessed, and sometimes

work miracles or prophesy by an evil spirit. As an example, a pastor from Uganda told me how his father had been a famous witch doctor before he was led to Christ. He would start his religious gatherings with singing and chanting until the demonic spirits would come upon him. Then he would demonstrate supernatural powers such as walking on fire without being harmed.

While these are valuable spiritual lessons for us to learn about the power of music, we also need to further understand that the battles *between* the forces of light and darkness often take place through music. Most Christians know that evangelistic teams regularly use music to invade the devil's territory and rescue souls for Christ. However, what fewer believers understand is that the enemy sometimes uses music to bring spiritual attacks into the churches!

I saw an example of this one night when a young pastor returned to visit his former Bible school. At the evening meeting he sang a special song that kept repeating the words, "I love you." However, this young man was not singing his repeated "I love you" words to the Lord, but to the various pretty young ladies in the congregation! His singing was not a channel of the Holy Spirit, but a channel of a spirit of lust as he was seeking a "warm" response from any of the women that he was singing to. The reality of this spiritual discernment was confirmed a few weeks later when we discovered that this pastor was involved in an immoral relationship back in his church.

There was another time a spiritual attack was taking place through the music ministry team of a church. While visiting the church my spirit was troubled by the performance this team was putting on during the song service. Pride, lust, rebellion, and self-centeredness all seemed to be exhibited throughout their stage performance. Afterwards, while ignoring the preaching, they all went to the back of the church where they continued to talk loudly, laugh, and disturb the congregation. The spiritual mixture they released both during the song service and afterwards made it difficult for the congregation to receive any spiritual blessing from the church service.

I talked with the pastors after the service, who then unloaded their grief to me. They said that the musicians and singers were rebellious, proud, and disobeyed their dating standards to the point of probable immorality. The pastors said that the group was a negative influence to the church members. In return I shared with them my concerns that the spiritual mixture in their lives was releasing demonic attacks upon the church services through their performances.

Some people might wonder whether evil spirits could come into a church service. However, we can understand this better by considering the first chapter of Job. There we can read about a time when Satan came, along with the rest of the angels, to present himself before the Lord in heaven. If the Devil can stand before the throne of God among the congregation of heaven, then it would not be surprising for his demons to also at times stand among the congregations on earth!

This truth can also be seen in Genesis 15:11. We read from there, "*And when the vultures came down on the carcasses [of the sacrifices], Abram drove them away.*" The vultures represented evil spirits, even as our Lord spoke about the birds as being a type of the Devil in Mark 4:15. Abraham had to drive away the vultures that tried to eat the sacrifice before the Lord came down and accepted the offerings. In a similar manner, there are times when we need to drive away the evil spirits that are trying to defile our sacrifices of praise and worship.

A good worship service will often be used of God to attack the powers of darkness, but there are times when we may face an enemy counterattack. During this type of worship service we must drive away these spiritual counterattacks, just as Abraham drove away the predator birds that were seeking to devour his offerings to God. It is only then that the Lord will come down to both accept our worship and to bless us.

Because music can be a powerful spiritual channel—for both good and bad—we need discernment in the house of God. We need to be able to guard our church services from enemy infiltration, as well as enter into godly music and worship. This will release the moving of the Holy Spirit to both glorify God and bring victory to God's people!

Music Influences the Soul

Music is commonly used to communicate to the soul. Different types of music can influence your emotions to make you feel happy, sad, confused, or peaceful. The great German reformer, Martin Luther, wrote, "Whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to pacify those full of hate....what more effective means than music could you find?"

Our Lord Himself spoke about this in Luke 7:32. He said that those who were trying to influence John the Baptist and Himself were like the children who complained, "*We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We mourned to you, and you did not weep.*" Music is used to influence people! An advertisement will repeatedly play a catchy tune to get you to buy their product, while a patriotic song can help a soldier to feel proud to march out and fight for his country. Also, consider this: how often have you been at a good party that had no music? Good music is an important part of any festive occasion!

Some companies have conducted tests to determine how music can influence customers in a store. They have found that playing slower, peaceful music will encourage the shoppers to stay in the store longer and buy more. As a result they will play this type of music during the daytime until about 4:00 P.M. to help keep the shoppers in their store. But after about 4:00 P.M. as people start to leave their places of employment, and the stores begin to fill up with many people. Then the stores will change their music to fast, lively songs that encourage the people to buy what they came for and quickly leave- so that there is room for the other shoppers who are crowding in!

Music can influence not only individual persons, but also groups of people and even nations. Otto Von Bismarck, the famous 19th century unifier and leader of Germany, declared that music was one of the most important agents for bringing about the unification of his country. He said, "It was not the size of our army but its spirit that enabled us to conquer. For this reason I hope no one in the future will undervalue the power of music in arousing courage and devotion." The Greek philosopher Plato wrote, "When the music of a nation changes, the nation changes." Confucius said, "Do you want to know if a land is well governed, and its people have good morals? Listen to its music." In line with this observation we can examine the musical trends in Western society during the last fifty years. Where music has slipped into increased immorality, cursing, and violence, we can see similar trends in its society.

Music Influences the Body

Music also communicates to the body. Changes in the volume, pitch, speed, and beat of music have been medically reported to have an effect on the human body in many areas including the heartbeat rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, gland secretions, and speed of breathing.

For example, let us consider one effect that very loud music has on the human body. Everyone has two small glands located above their kidneys that produce a natural drug called adrenaline. This natural drug is a stimulant released during times of stress or physical emergency to make a person temporarily very strong and alert. In effect, the person becomes "high" from the release of this natural stimulant. One circumstance that makes the human body feel that it is under stress or attack is when very loud music (such as at a rock music concert or a disco hall) is blasting loudly. The human body will prepare to defend itself by releasing adrenaline into the bloodstream. People can then feel "high," not from an illegal drug, but from their own bodies releasing adrenaline to prepare them for self-defense against the attack of the loud music that is beating upon them!

Another way that music can be used to control the body is if a song with a strong beat is played faster and faster. This can cause the pulse rate to speed up with the increasing beat of the music and produce high blood pressure. This technique is often used by cheerleaders and rock musicians to increase the excitement of the occasion. Conversely, peaceful music can relax muscle tension. Dozens of medical studies have investigated this and have found that up to 98% of the people who suffer from anxiety and muscle tension can be helped by listening to gentle, peaceful music. For this reason many dentists have peaceful, soothing music playing in their reception room to relax the nervous patients who are waiting for treatment. It is much easier for dentists to work if their patients are not nervously tightening their mouth and jaw muscles in fear of the pain that may come.

The Healing Power of Music

The powerful effect that music can have upon people is so universally recognized that many hospitals, therapists, and psychiatrists throughout the world are using music to help treat their patients. National associations of music therapists have been organized in the United States, Britain, Canada, and many other nations. Universities around the world have been offering degrees in music therapy for over 60 years, and there are thousands of registered music therapy professionals. The *Journal of Music Therapy* and other publications record the research of these health professionals, while insurance programs such as Medicaid and Blue Cross accept music therapy as a medical treatment. Music is being used to help the emotional, physical, and spiritual problems of man in many areas including insanity, alcoholism, autism, nervous tension, hyperactivity, and depression.

The Corruption of Music

God created music to be a powerful channel of communication. The world recognizes the power of music and spends great amounts of money to provide music for advertising, entertainment, and other forms of influencing people. However, Satan also knows the power of music! Before man was created, angels were created with the ministry of music.

One great leader of the angels who is specifically mentioned in the Bible as being created with musical ability is Lucifer, whose name means *Light Bearer*. Ezekiel 28:13 says about Lucifer that “*the workmanship of thy tabrets [tambourines] and of thy pipes [flutes] was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created*” (KJV). Just as a person is created with musical instruments (such as vocal cords), in a similar manner the angel Lucifer was able to make music. While we can only imagine what types of tamborines and flutes were created within his body, they quite probably did not seem unusual at all. After all, consider what people are born with: stringed instruments (vocal chords), percussion instruments (hands to clap and feet to tap), as well as a wind instrument (a mouth and lips to whistle). Each of these musical instruments in our bodies seem very natural as well as useful.

The garments that God designed to cover Lucifer would suggest that he functioned as a high priest among the angels.⁷ This indicates that he was a great worship leader also. A confirmation of this is shown by his title “*the Anointed Cherub who Covers [the throne of God]*” in Ezekiel 28:14. When we study Revelation chapters four and five about the heavenly beings who cover the throne of God, we find that they are worship leaders. Lucifer was perhaps the greatest musician and worship leader among the angels, leading the worship of heaven. When he lifted himself up in pride against God and led many of the angels to rebel, some of the talents that he surely used to help lead the rebellion were his musical and worship leading abilities!

We can think of what it might have been like in heaven before the rebellion. Lucifer, the anointed cherub, would play his music and lead the angelic hosts in worship to God. What an anointing must have filled the temple of heaven! As revelation flowed, Lucifer the *Light Bearer* would have taught them new songs that led them higher and higher into the glory of God.

Yet when Lucifer began to lift himself up in pride, the scriptures tell us that he began to keep some of the glory for himself. He probably began to lead songs of worship that were increasingly filled with his self-exaltation. Many of the angels were probably thrilled by these bold new songs of beauty and pride, although the faithful angels would not join in. As the rebellion blossomed into maturity, Lucifer’s hosts may have marched to boastful songs, just as the armies of the world now march to war with their songs encouraging them on!

Even today, many church splits are caused by worship leaders and musicians. Some have proudly told their pastoral leadership, “We are the ones who know how to lead the singing and worship. You pastors aren’t even musical! You do the preaching, but we will control the praise and worship. And if you try to hinder us or control us, we will take our music equipment and our followers, and start our own church!” Worship leaders and musicians often help lead church splits because they are skilled in leading and influencing the members of the church—whether for good, or for evil.

When Lucifer fell, he kept his musical talents but they became corrupted in nature. Isaiah prophesied of this when he declared about Lucifer in chapter 14:13 that “*your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of*

your stringed instruments.” As Satan is still seeking to corrupt the world today, he is using music to help lead mankind towards the world, the flesh and the devil. Satan knows the power of music and worship. In his wilderness temptations of Christ he was willing to offer the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, if He would only fall down and worship him. Satan knows that if he can control the worship, then he can control everything!

Our Need for Spiritual Discernment

It is very important for us to understand that while God made music to be good, it can be corrupted by Satan and his followers—and even by unsuspecting Christians—and used for evil. I recently read this statement in a Christian book: “God made everything good, including music, so how can any music be called evil?” This logic is as faulty as saying: “God made all the angels good, so how can any of the angels be called evil?” We need to discern how the fallen angels and corrupted mankind are using their music for evil. The spiritual war between the armies of God and Satan is not fought with natural weapons, rather, it is often fought with musical instruments. Just as a wise army commander must understand the battles that he fights, we must learn to discern the spiritual battles that take place in the music and worship around us.

People can be talented and popular musicians or singers, but when they are born again as spiritual babies in Christ they must begin to learn how to minister by the Spirit with their music. Natural talent (without the anointing of the Holy Spirit) can only entertain, even though Christians may like it and people may fill a church to hear good entertainment. Churches should be very careful about quickly giving a music ministry to a new convert, even if he is very musically talented. This is as spiritually dangerous as giving the pulpit to a newly saved politician or actor and letting him preach all the time, just because he is a talented speaker. Ministry is not primarily a result of talents and abilities, or by might and power: it is accomplished by the Spirit of God moving through a consecrated vessel.

When we are saved, we need to develop spiritual discernment and have our minds renewed. This will cause us to understand and discern the spiritual forces that are seeking to move through the music around us—the battle between God and Satan. Then we can prepare to have a life and ministry of godly, anointed music that will help bring revival to God’s people and bring glory to God!