

WHAT NORTHSIDE TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT MUSIC

We teach them five basic Bible truths about music:

1. Singing is an activity in which God Himself participates. *Zephaniah 3:17*
2. Singing is a natural result of salvation. *Psalms 40:1-3*
3. Singing is one evidence of living a Spirit-filled life. *Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16*
4. Singing is a pervasively Scriptural method of praising the Lord. *Psalms 28:7; Hebrews 2:12*
5. Singing is a foretaste of glory divine since it will go on in Heaven for all eternity. *Rev. 5,15*

We teach them eight practical applications of these truths:

1. Singing combines music and words, thereby appealing to both the emotions (music) and the intellect (words, text, or lyrics). Its proper function is aligning the emotions with Godly choices and decisions of the will. A spiritual singing is not an emotional experience accompanied by music; it is a musical expression of the truth of Scripture (Fisher, p. 34).
2. In addition to the message of the words, the music itself conveys a message and evokes specific emotional responses. A Strauss waltz and a Sousa march produce different emotions and transmit different messages, totally apart from the lyrics, which often do not exist. Rock musicians have written extensively on the responses they seek to produce by the music itself (Fisher, p. 81 ff.).
3. The music, which appeals to the emotions, has a natural tendency to overpower the words: by volume, by beat, by rhythm, etc. This is contrary to its purpose, which is to support and enhance the text. Much great Christian music is the result of setting great texts to music, such as Handel's *Messiah*, which is virtually an orchestration of King James Version texts.
4. Therefore, Christians should select music in which the score and the text convey a blended message which the intellect has judged appropriate. This includes beautiful secular music and should not be pre-determined by the music of the culture in which we live or were raised.
5. Some recently written Christian music is very good. The acceptability of the composition is determined by the criteria given above, not by the year in which the piece was written.
6. There is such a thing as unacceptable Christian music. The text may contain error, may be shallow, or may be so Amy experience-oriented that the Biblical balance is undermined. Or, the message of the music may contradict the text, may produce inappropriate emotional responses, or may be so intimately related to the world that the requirement to be separate is compromised. These problems characterize much of what is called Contemporary Christian Music or CCM, so named because much of it seeks to emulate contemporary culture with regards to sound and performer lifestyles.
7. There is some room for honest difference of opinion on what is acceptable music for the Christian. We will not answer for the choices of our brothers and sisters in Christ: each of us will answer for himself. If we are in a position (such as parents and Christian school administrators) to prescribe choices for others, we should not even enter the debate on the acceptable or even the good. We should confine our choices to the best. *Philippians 1.10*
8. Christians should develop to the fullest whatever musical talents God has given them, not for self-promotion but for ministry. Such effort will require self-discipline, delayed gratification, submitting to instruction, and other characteristics of Spiritually useful people.