

DOES GOD EVEN LIKE OUR MUSIC?

— Bob Kauflin —

Did you ever notice how people who know *nothing* about music can be really *opinionated* about music?

You don't have to have a music degree, you don't have to play an instrument, you can be absolutely tone deaf, and yet know exactly what kind of music you like and don't like.

I've been a professional musician for thirty years. I was an arranger and writer for the group GLAD. I received a degree in piano performance. It doesn't matter.

My wife, Julie, and I will be listening to some piece of music. It might be jazz or classical. I'm thinking – "This is AMAZING. Listen to those chord progressions! Check out those multi-rhythms! Listen to the way those melodies interweave with each other."

"It's brilliant!" *It's dumb.*

"It's incredible!" *It's boring.*

"It's mind-boggling!" *It puts me to sleep.*

"I love it!" *I hate it.*

We all seem to know what kind of music we like.

Did you ever wonder — What kind of music does GOD like?

He commands us to make music, so he must take pleasure in it. Does he like modern worship better than hymns? Rock better than country? Folk better than jazz? What if God's favorite music is opera?

The kind of music God likes isn't determined by a style, genre, beat, or generation.

He has other standards. I want to highlight three.

I. God likes music that is offered out of a life of worship.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Rom. 12:1 ESV)

A. God has never meant the music we make to be disassociated from the life we live.

B. Amos told the Israelites that God actually hated their musical worship.

“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies... Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen” (Amos 5:21, 23 ESV).

C. Why? Not because they sang out of tune, or the drums couldn't keep time. Not it was because he hated the music of their lives.

“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

D. We can be more like the Israelites than we think.

1. We can try to substitute practice and gifting for humility and godliness.
2. A great guitar solo doesn't impress God if I'm surfing the web for pornography at night.
3. My moving vocal performance sounds like fingernails on a chalkboard to God if my life is characterized by a self-centered pursuit of pleasure and entertainment.
4. Our great arrangements are repulsive to God if we struggle with envy any time someone else is encouraged or recognized.

E. Doesn't mean we're perfect. It only means we don't use the pursuit of great music as an excuse to live however we want.

F. We're not just musicians who happen to be Christians. We are Christians who happen to be musicians. There's a huge difference.

II. God likes music that is offered to serve others.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: (1 Pet. 4:10 ESV)

- A. Non-Christian musicians make music ultimately to serve themselves.
- B. They might sincerely want to use their gifts to make others feel good and bring them joy, but ultimately it's so they'll look better.
- C. We make music to make Jesus Christ look better. And we do that by serving others with our music.
- D. We do that in a number of ways.
 - 1. Adjust your volume. *Listen to what others are doing and saying.*
 - 2. Vary your arrangements. *Helps people hear words better and helps other musicians be heard.*
 - 3. Lay out. *Sometimes the best way we can serve with our music is to play nothing. Don't assume that being on stage means playing. You're serving. There's a big difference.*
 - 4. Stay within your time limit. *The Holy Spirit works more through humility than self-promotion.*
 - 5. If you're playing behind vocalists, consider their needs. *Singers depend on their ears to sing in tune.*
 - 6. Being glad when others have opportunities to play. *Dave Campbell.*
 - 7. Being quick to step aside if someone more gifted comes along.

III. God likes music that is offered in response to the Gospel.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col. 3:16-17)

The Gospel says that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place, to endure the punishment we deserved and to pay the debt we owed.

What is music offered in response to the Gospel?

A. Music filled with gratefulness.

1. “gratitude in our hearts...giving thanks”
2. because our greatest need has been met, our greatest problem has been solved
3. Fine to identify with struggles, challenges, trial. Fine to be authentic, genuine, and real.
4. But let’s be clear — we know the one with all the answers. More importantly, he knows us.
5. Our lives have been transformed from hopeless to hope-filled, from death to life, from hell to heaven.

B. Music marked by humility.

1. All that we could accomplish and achieve, all our great works and deeds, all our wisdom and knowledge resulted in Jesus being crucified in our place for our sins, receiving our punishment, enduring God’s wrath against us so that we could be justified in God’s eyes and be forgiven.
2. In God’s eyes, the greatest musicians aren’t the ones with the most developed technique, the best time, or the most creative chops. They’re the ones who recognize that apart from Jesus Christ, they can do nothing of eternal significance.

C. Music that seeks to make much of Jesus Christ.

1. “the word of Christ...in the name of the Lord Jesus...through him”
2. Making much of Jesus Christ with our music doesn’t mean simply writing and singing songs with the name of Jesus in them.
3. It means offering every note, every phrase, every chorus, every song with the prayer that Jesus would receive glory in and through you.
4. In the end there will only be two kinds of people. Those who endlessly proclaim the glories of the Lamb who was slain....and those who proclaim their own glories in hell.
5. We have the opportunity hear, now, to make much of Jesus Christ not only with our music, but with our lives.
6. What’s holding us back?

IV. Who Knows?

- A. What would happen if you determined by God’s grace only to make music that pleased God?
1. That reflected a desire to please him in every area of our lives?
 2. That sought to serve others?
 3. That was a grateful and humble response to the Gospel?
- B. Our lives would be changed...we’d be happier...and God would love the music we’re making.