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Unless otherwise indicated, every article was written by our preacher, Russell M. Kline

# THE PAPER PULPIT

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*Singing as Worship*

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## Singing is a Verbal Action

Language is defined by the rules that govern its use. In order to be understood, speakers of any language must obey the rules of that language. That is why “ebonics” never really got off to a good start. If one who is speaking or writing is to be properly understood, then he must adhere to rules of the language he is using.

That is also why God uses language to communicate with humanity. God knows all about the laws of every language and uses them to communicate His will in the clearest and most concise way. It is easy for people to understand what is meant, if they are told to “sing” a song and it is equally easy, if they are

told to “play” a song. Easier still is when people are told to “sing and play” a song. In the Bible, Christians are commanded to “sing,” in the worship they offer the Lord (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians commanded to “play,” or to “sing and play.” The rules of language being what they are, there is only one correct interpretation of what the Bible says, in the matter of singing in the worship of the church.

But there are so many in the religious world who will not abide by what the Bible says, and who are determined to use

mechanical instruments of music in the worship they offer; whether such things are authorized, or not. They argue that worshipping God with the addition of such devices sounds better than it does without them and that their use appeals to the masses. But these feeble arguments cannot stand up to the test of Scripture. The language of the text reveals the will of God.

In Ephesians 5:19, the Bible says, “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...*” The lan-

guage of the text clearly indicates that the singing we do in worship is intended to be a verbal action. The essence of true worship is the offering of a “*sacrifice of praise to God,*” which is de-

scribed as “*the fruit of our lips*” (Heb. 13:15). Of course, our hearts and minds are to be focused on God, when we worship. Jesus indicated this in His criticism of the religious hypocrisy of His time: “*This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*” (Mark 7:6). According to Ephesians 5:19, as we sing praise to the Lord, we are to make melody in our hearts to the Lord. That is why, in the churches of Christ, we simply obey the command to sing, in the worship we offer to God. Anything more or less than that would be sinful.

***“I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”***

**—1 Corinthians 14:15**



## Quotable Quotations

“Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.”

—Thomas Aquinas

“The organ in the worship is the insignia of Baal! The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews.”

—Martin Luther

“The name of God, no doubt, can, properly speaking, be celebrated only by the articulate voice.”

—John Calvin

“The use of such instruments of music, in the Christian Church, is without the sanction and against the will of God...they are sinful.”

—Adam Clarke

“I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.”

—John Wesley

[EDITOR’S NOTE: The preceding quotations come from *The Amazing History of Instrumental Music*, parts 1 and 2, by Allen Webster. Contact us for a free copy of both.]

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

—Colossians 3:16

## Singing is a Form of Teaching

Acts 16:25 through 34 records the account of how the jailer for the ancient city of Philippi was converted to Christianity. In the course of the day, Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten and put in the jail, because they had helped a young girl who was possessed by a demon (Acts 16:16-23). The jailer put them in his most secure cell and bound their hands and feet (Acts 16:24). “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them” (Acts 16:25). That night, an earthquake struck the city and damaged the jail (Acts 16:26). The pris-

oners could easily have escaped, but they remained together with Paul and Silas (Acts 16:27,28). This made such an impression upon the jailer that he wanted to know, right there and then, what he must do to be saved (Acts 16:29-32). When he and his household had heard the gospel of Christ, they all obeyed it and were saved from their sins (Acts 16:33,34).

In this account, it is evident that the singing Paul and Silas did, in that old Philippian jail, had a direct impact on the conversion of the jailer and his family. It is living proof of the

principle that Paul wrote about in Colossians 3:16—singing is a form of teaching. The words of the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that Christians sing are not meaningless. They can teach people about faith in God, the importance of obeying God, the importance of remaining faithfully committed to God, etc. That is why it is important for Christians to pay attention to the words of the songs they sing, and sing only those songs that actually teach the truth. It is also why it is important for every Christian to sing together in the worship service; so they may learn and teach others.

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# “Making Melody in Your Heart”

**W**hy don't members of the churches of Christ use mechanical instruments of music, when they sing in their worship services? This is the question that crosses the minds of most who come and visit us. When people visit us for the first time, they wonder, “Where's the piano? Where's the organ? Where's the drum set and the five-piece band?” Some mistakenly think that we do not make use of such things simply because it is our *tradition* to sing “a capella.” Our singing has nothing at all to do with tradition and everything to do with what is authorized by the Word of God (Col. 3:17). The Bible authorizes Christians to “sing,” so that is what we do (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Ephesians 5:19 is the preeminent passage on the subject of singing. It indicates, first of all, that singing is a verbal action; “*Speaking to yourselves...*” Second, it indicates where Christians are to make melody, as they sing. It does **not** say that they should do so on a piano, or a guitar, but rather, “*...making melody in your heart...*” In the Bible, the word “heart” is frequently used to refer to one's brain; “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...*” (Pro. 23:7; cf. Mat. 5:28; 2 Cor. 9:7). Ephesians 5:19 specifies that Christians ought to sing, and rules out the playing of instruments, or the clapping of hands, or the imitation of those sounds. Couple that with the complete lack of Biblical examples of Christians ever hav-

ing done anything more than sing and it's easy to see why we do what we do in the churches of Christ!

People offer many objections to singing without mechanical instruments of music in worship, but the bottom line is that the New Testament does not authorize the use of such equipment in the worship of the church. Those who play “fast and loose” with the commandments of the Lord are gambling the He will not hold their disrespect of His Word against them. The Lord has given us ample warning against taking liberties with His Word (Rev. 22:18,19). On the Day of Judgment, many will be surprised that they are on the wrong side of things (Mat. 7:21-23).

**“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”**

**—Ephesians 5:19**

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## Web Sites That Won't Waste Your Time...



[www.gbntv.org](http://www.gbntv.org)

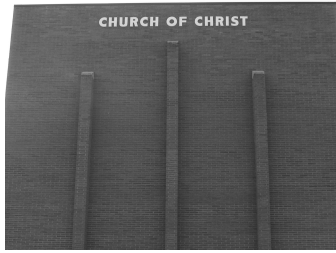
The **Gospel Broadcasting Network** is a 24-hours per day, 7-days per week television network, which airs programming exclusively produced by members of the churches of Christ. Watch their live video stream, or archived programs at their web site.



**Apologetics Press** is a group of Christians who are dedicated to the publication of printed materials and audio/video materials, which are designed to refute atheism and advocate for Biblical Christianity. Their web address is [www.apologeticspress.org](http://www.apologeticspress.org).



**Focus Press** is a group of Christians who are also dedicated to the publication of various materials, which are designed to refute atheism and advocate for Biblical Christianity. Their web address is [www.focuspress.org](http://www.focuspress.org).



Madisonville Church of Christ

**Sunday Morning Bible Study**

—9:30 a.m.

**Sunday Morning Worship**

—10:30 a.m.

**Sunday Evening Worship**

—6:00 p.m.

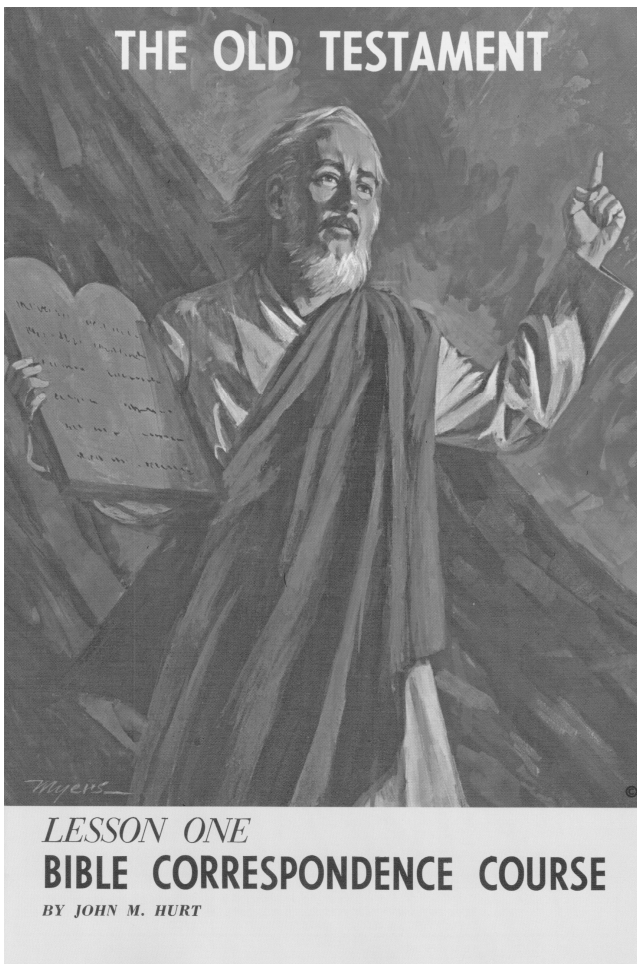
**Wednesday Evening Bible Study**

—7:00 p.m.

*A Christ-Preaching, Bible-Teaching Church*

## Why Do Christians Sing?

It has been rightly observed that there are more songs written about love than about any other subject. When one falls in love, his spirit soars, his heart becomes light as a feather, and his soul wants to sing out the news to world. It is no different, when one falls in love with the Lord. He expects His people to want to sing, so He commands them to indulge their desire with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. It is the duty of every Christian to give God the singing He wants to hear. Therefore, we present this study of what the Bible says about singing.



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