

Discussions on Instrumental Music in Worship (Part 3)
Where Do We Go From Here?

By Byron Fike
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Previously we've discussed the tri-fold hermeneutic that was widely used in our past. The command, example, and necessary inference way of looking at scripture was used to detect a pattern that we could imitate. Thus, every issue was reduced to the question, "*Is this authorized?*" When people reached different answers to the question, it created division. After all, using this method meant that God had either authorized a certain thing or he had not. As people reached different conclusions each was convinced that they were standing with God.



Last week, I presented a better way to read scripture. Instead of asking the text to give thumbs up or thumbs down to our agenda, we should read scripture to understand the inspired author's agenda. In this way, we can emphasize what God wants us to emphasize. This also changes the questions we ask about specific items for which scripture is silent. In regard to instrumental music in worship; rather than asking, "*Is this authorized?*" better questions might be; "*Is this beneficial or helpful?*" And, "*Does this help us achieve God's purposes?*"

Three conclusions were presented at the end of last week's presentation on what Scripture says and does not say concerning instruments in worship.

- ▶ **God never directly speaks against instrumental music in worship.** Instruments were used with God's approval in the Old Testament; however the New Testament is silent on the subject. This silence neither condemns nor condones. Silence here simply means the matter was not directly addressed.
- ▶ **There is no specific anti-instrument argument to be found in Scripture.** There are arguments people make against using instruments in worship but the authors of the Bible never make such arguments.
- ▶ **There is no direct statement in Scripture that early Christians sang Acapella.** It appears that they did, but no where does the New Testament explicitly say this. The word "Acapella" is not found anywhere in scripture.

Since these things are true, condemning as sinful those who use instruments in worship is to speak where God has not spoken. We have been guilty of this in the past, and we were wrong. We can hold personal opinions on this subject, but we cannot bind them on others. We can disagree without judging.

**Personal Opinions On
Instruments In Worship**

**“Everything that does not come from
faith is sin”**

(Romans 14:23)

Sin _____

When it comes to personal views on instruments in worship there is a wide variety of opinions. I’m going to use two scripture quotations to illustrate the extremes. On one end think of Paul’s statement, *“Everything that does not come from faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23). I can remember as a young man sitting in a worship assembly wrestling with whether or not I should sing since an instrument was being played. That was an internal faith struggle. At that point in my life, it would have violated my conscience to participate. With continued study and spiritual growth, I moved beyond that fear.

Some of you have no idea what I’m even talking about. Others of you know exactly what I mean. This may be the struggle some of you are having. We as a church need to be sensitive to those who are near this end of the spectrum. We need to practice Paul’s instruction in Romans 14:13, *“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”* The stumbling block occurs when someone is pushed further than their faith can sustain them. Even if it’s a good thing you are pushing, if your brother or sister’s faith is not strengthened first, you will turn something good into something evil. Thus, the Apostle also writes, *“Do not let what you know is good, be spoken of as evil.”* (Romans 14:16)

On the opposite end of the opinion spectrum is the quote, *“Everything is permissible”* (1 Corinthians 10:23). This appears to be a “slogan” used by some Christians in Corinth who were abusing their freedom in Christ. The problem was they were short sighted and thus unconcerned with the consequences of their actions. **Just because we can do something, doesn’t mean we should.** There is much more to consider than simply asking, *“Is it lawful?”* Consider Paul’s instructions,

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“Everything is permissible”

(1 Corinthians 10:23 NIV)

Sin _____ Everything
is Permitted

*“I have the right to do anything,” you say—
but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not
everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of
others. (1 Corinthians 10:23-24 TNIV)*

This puts the issue of instrumental music in a whole different light. Is this beneficial? Is this constructive? Is this helpful? The question we really need to wrestle with is this: *“Would instrumental music in worship help or hinder us in fulfilling God’s purposes for this church at this time?”* This is the question we’re asking you to answer next week. This week, we want to you to listen to people who may not think like you do.

The purpose of our round table discussions is that you might grow in your understanding and appreciation of people who hold different opinions than you do. The purpose is not for you to try to convince everyone at your table to see things your way; rather, you must listen with a desire to understand where other people are coming from.