

**MUSIC AND MORALS: FACTORS AFFECTING THE ETHICAL
BEHAVIOR OF THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH MUSICIAN**

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ABSTRACT

For centuries till date music as a form of art has been indicted as being the source of immorality in society – especially in the life of musicians themselves.

However, certain authors have been able to show that the music medium alone does not transfer immorality, but associated images and cultural nuances that are in themselves moral.

In essence, this essay shows that rather than throw out the baby (music) with the birth water (negative attachments), the music can be sanitized by dealing positively with other potent factors of: conversion, discipleship and spiritual formation, and time management.

The essay concludes with practical solutions proffered and examples taken from the spiritual lives of some great musicians of the past (King David, Frederic Handel , Johann Sebastian Bach, and Fanny Crosby) bearing testimony that music and Christian morality with spirituality are compatible to God's glory.

B. CONCLUSION

It is my conclusion that the use of contemporary music in worship is not without its risks. For music truly has the power to dispose one towards the acquisition of virtues. However, not without re-enforcing associations and images that tends one to either the virtue or the vice.

Again, I believe that a conscious and thoughtful approach to the other incidental yet potent factors of moral relations, that is; conversion, discipleship and spiritual formation, as well as judicious time management will ultimately result in our seeing morally transformed Christian musicians in our churches in the nearest future.

This thesis would not be complete without proffering practical solutions and or suggestions strictly in line with the issues raised as causes of immoral behaviour amongst church musicians. The following are my suggestions.

First, it has been established that 'bad lyrics', immoral images such as secular music groups professing sexual immorality, rebellion, Satanism and such other vices should be avoided by the church musicians. The temptation to listen to or to watch such groups is tied to the desire to improve on one's skill. Here, we reaffirm that viable alternative professional Christian music groups exists within the kingdom. The church should make their works assessable to its musicians.

On the issue of conversion, there are four possibilities depending on the situation of a particular church. The first is to train church members who are known as Christians, to take up music ministry responsibilities.

If the church thinks employing musicians or volunteers from outside would be its best alternative then, they should screen potential musicians being considered as to their spiritual background. Here it is necessary to re-iterate that no assumptions should be allowed.

Still on this issue, if the church has already in its team musicians that are not converted (paid or volunteers), it has the option to work out a program that would ultimately lead to their making tangible spiritual commitments or in the other event relieve them of their ministry responsibility with clear reasons for such action. This might be necessary bearing in mind the biblical admonition that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (I Corinthians 5:6)

The issue of discipleship and spiritual formation cannot be treated lightly. The church needs to take it as its duty to minister to everyone – its ministers inclusive. Skill should not be equated with spiritual maturity. All converts should be given an opportunity to go through a well planned discipleship program that would expose them to the fundamentals of Christianity and the need for a life long lifestyle of discipleship. The church musician should not be left out. On the contrary, they should be given priority.

Eric Utsler writes that, “before a music ministry group or choir can act as spiritual leaders for a community, the coordinators, conductors, and directors must model through their words and actions the concept of spiritual direction. The spiritual health and growth of these individuals must be nourished through workshops, retreats, and by time in prayer and reflection.”¹⁰¹

Other discipleship materials abound such as “Follow the Master,” “Serve the Master,” “Master Life,” “Experiencing God” and their like. These have been proved to be effective in instructing in spirituality and maturity.

¹⁰¹ Eric Utsler, “Spiritual Leadership: Do We Take It Seriously?” Pastoral Music, June – July, 1997, p. 51.

Moral instruction can also be introduced subtly into practice sessions. For instance, after a focus is established on ministry, time should be taken as a music group to read and discuss the scriptures. The leader or someone else in the group might give a short reflection that ties the reading to music and to the general mission as Christian music evangelists. There should also be time for sharing prayer points and all should be given opportunities to freely do so.

Prayer should habitually precede any worship service. This would help set the mood for 'ministering' the forthcoming music and would help the church musicians not to fall into a 'Jamming' routine. Similarly, Utsler suggests that the pastor should

find opportunities for the music ministers to use their gifts and talents as a model of discipleship for the total community by involving them in service projects, fund raising events for charity, and other programs, by becoming involved in these and similar activities, musicians can send a powerful message of 'practicing' what they preach through their music. Further, they grow together as a musical and spiritual family working together to bring about justice within and assistance to the community around them.¹⁰²

Concerning time management, priority setting has been mentioned as being crucial, for "he that seeks to do everything will end up doing nothing." M. Quoist suggests that, "the knowledge of problem solving techniques is crucial to time management."¹⁰³ Lack of knowledge on how to solve problems (domestic and professional) causes more waste of time. Here, seminars and sound biblical teaching would help subjugate the "evil day."

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 51.

¹⁰³ M. Quoist, The Christian Response (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1965), p. 75

A well set out organizer or time table would be advantageous to time management. The timetable should be practical and should make provision for practice, study, recreation, devotion and other things necessary.

Finally, procrastination should be avoided. Where it is found present, its cause (or causes) should be isolated. Here, the pastor or the music director should assist the person involved. Fear of failure, criticism, lack of a future plan (after that being done presently) and or pure laziness are major causes of procrastination. They can all be addressed by effective Christian counseling.

In concluding, we need to keep in mind that “problem of morality and religion are among the most pressing problems of our time.”¹⁰⁴ The gravity of this observation lies in the fact that sustenance of civilization is a moral and spiritual issue rather than a physical one.¹⁰⁵ If therefore, there is a medium by which we can extend the frontiers of our civilization, I suggest rather boldly that it would be through powerful, meaningful creative and spiritual Christian music produced by spiritually sanctified and morally upright Christian musicians.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the fact that it is practically an impossible task to cover all such issues relating to such a broad and controversial topic like Music and Morals. Coupled with the fact that the writer is constrained by factors of time, space, technical and financial resources, it is recommended that further studies be carried out in the following areas:

¹⁰⁴ Harold Titus, What is a Mature Morality? p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1.

