

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP: IS IT A "BIG DEAL"?



Dave Miller, Ph.D.

Is Instrumental Music in Worship A “Big Deal”?

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We humans often have difficulty striking a balance in many aspects of our lives—from what and how much we eat, to how much time we spend in various pursuits. Even in religion, it is easy for individuals to spend so much time and effort emphasizing some doctrines in both teaching and practice that they neglect others and, hence, become spiritually imbalanced. The matter is further muddled by those who point to a passage here and there and conclude that some doctrines are of such significance that the Christian is justified in treating other doctrines as trivial, peripheral, and optional.

I CORINTHIANS 15:3

One passage that has facilitated this view of Scripture is 1 Corinthians 15:3, where Paul alluded to items “of **first importance**” (NIV, NASB, RSV, ESV), identified as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The contextual reason Paul pressed these central truths of Christianity was so that he could convince the Corinthians of the reality of the future resurrection of the human body. It is a serious mistake to conclude that Paul intended to limit the doctrines that are to be considered of great importance solely to the death, burial, and resurrection. Indeed, by such reasoning, the resurrection of the physical body of both Christian

and non-Christian, enjoined so strongly in this chapter, is not of great importance.

In reality, Paul stressed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as matters of first importance in the sense that they constitute the defining event in redemptive history that God brought to fruition after 4,000 years of human history—an event preplanned in eternity (Ephesians 3:10-11; Revelation 13:8). This occurrence is the means by which all human beings who have ever lived might be saved. Without Jesus' death, nothing else matters. It would not matter what we believed (about **anything**) or how we behaved—if Jesus did not atone for human sin. Compare the death, burial, and resurrection to the **heart** within the human body. Without the human heart pumping blood, the body cannot live. Yet this reality is not intended to minimize the critical importance of the other organs and parts of the body, including the brain, liver, stomach, lungs, etc. In fact, Paul made this very point in chapter 12 of this same book, where he stressed the fact that **every** part of the body has its important role.

So, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is central and of first importance since **it was necessary for atonement** and was intended to be the foundational motivation for obeying the Gospel and then living the Christian life faithfully. Those whose agenda prompts them to use this passage to label some doctrines as not “of first importance” are, in fact, guilty of **underemphasizing** (or outright dismissing) **doctrines that Jesus intends for everyone to observe.**

Worship is Not of Secondary Importance

Surely Paul (and the Holy Spirit Who guided him) would be shocked to hear preachers use this verse to create the impression that all other doctrines of Christianity—if not directly tied to the death, burial, and resurrection—are of

less or even minimal concern and can, consequently, virtually be deemed optional. The truth is that there are a host of other doctrines in the Bible enjoined by God and Christ as extremely important. Indeed, **how deity expects to be worshiped has always been of great concern to God.** It has always been a “**big deal.**”

God has always made worship protocol plain and expected humans to treat it as a “big deal.” Indeed, Jesus made worship a “big deal” in John 4:23-24 when He declared: “**true** worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is **seeking** such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him **must** worship in spirit and truth.” “True” worshippers implies one can be a false worshipper; God “seeking” true worshippers implies that worshipping Him matters; and “must” indicates that **proper** worship is of such importance (“big deal”) that those who wish to do so **must** conform to the worship specifications He has given. I repeat: God has **always** been concerned about how humans approach Him. Bible history is replete with accounts in which the worshippers, who did not consider worship protocol to be a “big deal,” were rejected by God (e.g., Genesis 4:5; Leviticus 10:1-3; 1 Samuel 13:9ff.; 2 Chronicles 26:15ff.).

Paul likewise considered worship actions to be a “big deal.” Immediately after instructing Christians how to worship in song, he insisted that whatever is said or done must be done with Christ's approval (Colossians 3:17). All worship activity must therefore be authorized by God. Consider whether God would have accepted Abraham's worship, in the matter of offering his son, if he had tampered with the divine instructions (Genesis 22).

Other Matters of Considerable Importance

What about the church? Does the church matter? The church is not the death, burial, and

resurrection, yet Jesus said to seek the kingdom (church) **first** (Matthew 6:33).

Covetousness is not directly tied to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Yet, this sin has been held up throughout Scripture as a matter of serious concern—**very** important. Not only was it included as one of the 10 commandments in the Law of Moses, the New Testament is riddled with allusions to it—not the least of which are the numerous times that Jesus, Himself, addressed the covetous misuse of money and possessions. Paul called it “idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Indeed, this sin is depicted over and over as sufficient to send a person to hell.

Paul spoke sternly regarding those who “forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods” (1 Timothy 4:3, NIV). These teachings are identified as characteristic of those who depart from/abandon the faith—yet they have nothing to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The same may be said concerning Paul’s remarks one chapter later where he identified a failure to provide for one’s relatives as a denial of the faith, making one worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). But based on the flawed interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:3, one would expect to see such serious condemnations reserved only for those who deny the death, burial, and resurrection.

The Bible in both Old and New Testaments enjoins the need for God’s people to be sufficiently concerned about the poor and needy (Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 19:10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Job 31:16ff.; Psalm 41:1; Amos 2:6-7; Matthew 25:35-40; Galatians 2:10; James 2:1-6, 15-17; et al.). But, once again, helping the poor is not tied directly to the death, burial, and resurrection.

Churches and preachers that minimize their worship corruptions typically tend to gloss

over their members who are **living** in adultery (Colossians 3:7; Romans 6:2). Adultery has nothing to do with the death, burial, and resurrection. Yet, adultery is depicted throughout Scripture as a sin that culminates in hell—unless the guilty person terminates the adulterous entanglement (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5-6).

If only those doctrines that are linked to or intimately connected with the death, burial, and resurrection are to be considered “of first importance,” what about lying, murder, and sexual immorality? After all, these have no direct link to the death, burial, and resurrection (like baptism and the Lord’s Supper do), yet they are of such significance that God explicitly stated that those who practice such things “shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8). Apparently, God has a different list of matters “of first importance.” In fact, in the very first church of Christ on Earth, God struck dead two members of the congregation “simply” because they told a lie about the amount of money they received for the sale of their property (Acts 5). Was their lie connected to the death, burial, and resurrection? No, it was connected to **an act of worship**: giving. Was their failure to tell the truth a matter “of first importance”? It was of sufficient importance to get them killed.

Paul stated to the Romans that those who are greedy, envious, deceitful, arrogant, slanderous, and disobedient to parents “are worthy of death” (Romans 1:32). Not one of these actions is connected to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, all of the death penalty offenses of the Law of Moses had nothing directly to do with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Paul certainly did not mean that such actions are “secondary”; he meant that if God had not orchestrated the atoning work of Christ, all

who commit such actions are permanently doomed; if the central features of Christianity are dismissed, all other doctrines won't matter in eternity.

The church, covetousness, teaching false religious doctrines, failing to care for relatives, adultery, and a host of immoral behaviors—all treated as matters of such importance that they will cause a person to be lost in hell.¹ Yet, none is tied to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.²

MATTHEW 22:37-39

Another example of distorted exegesis is seen in Matthew 22:37-39 where Jesus answered the lawyer's question concerning what constitutes the greatest commandment. "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). Observe that Jesus did **not** say that two commands mean more to God and are of greater concern and significance than all others. Rather, He meant that when you look at **all** the laws God gave to the Jews (and, for that matter, all laws that He has given to all of us today), they can **all** be **summarized** in the words of two Mosaic statements found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, "Love God" and "love your fellowman." In other words, the way to love both God and one's fellowman is to obey all the laws that God has given humans to obey—since every single one of them is intended to express proper love. Observe that the passage itself refutes the allegation, with the words: "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Jesus meant that **all** the Law and **all** the Prophets merely expound, elaborate on, and

apply the principles of love for God and love for fellowman. Paul made the exact same point in Romans 13:8-10. This verse is most certainly **not** teaching that if you'll just love God and love your neighbor, it doesn't matter so much **how** you worship God or whether you obey any of the other commandments of Scripture. On the contrary, loving God means obeying His commandments—including how He says to worship (John 14:15; 15:14; Matthew 15:8-9). What a serious matter to leave the impression with people that **any** doctrines of Jesus are of such lesser importance that they can be downplayed or dismissed.

MATTHEW 23:23

A third misused verse is Jesus' statement to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23—"For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected **the weightier matters of the law**: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." Some draw the false conclusion that as long as we focus on being just, merciful, and faithful, we can use instrumental music in worship. This interpretation distorts God's Word in the same way the Pharisees did. Incredibly, the Lord included in His remarks the definitive refutation of such thinking: "**These you ought to have done**, without leaving the others undone" (vs. 23). Jesus did not minimize the importance of tithing the herbs He enumerated. He simply emphasized to the Pharisees that their attention to these legal requirements was not accompanied by suitable concern for justice, mercy, and faith. To extract from this context the notion that those who insist on following God's directives for proper New Testament worship by excluding manmade instruments, are guilty of neglecting the weightier matters of the law, is tortured exegesis of the highest order.

Summary

To see that these proof texts are being abused and misapplied, consider the fact that the matters “of first importance” in 1 Corinthians 15:3, i.e., the death, burial, and resurrection, are not synonymous with Jesus’ “weightier matters,” i.e., “justice and mercy and faith,” nor Jesus’ first and second greatest commandments, i.e., “love the Lord your God” and “love your neighbor.” Examine the following chart:

A Comparison of Misused Passages		
1 Corinthians 15:3	Matthew 22:37-39	Matthew 23:23
Of First Importance	First and Second Commandments	Weightier Matters
Death, Burial, Resurrection	Love God Love Your Neighbor	Justice, Mercy, Faith

When Paul used the word “first” to refer to the death, burial, and resurrection, but Jesus used the word “first” to refer to loving God, did they contradict each other? **Only if you have imposed onto the text the concocted hermeneutical filter that every doctrine must be tied to the death, burial, and resurrection in order to be binding and mandatory.** In reality, **every** doctrine Jesus gave us is tied to the death, burial, and resurrection. When we die to sin (repent), are buried in water (baptized), and are raised to walk in “newness of life,” we then enter upon a life that entails faithful living, i.e., compliance with all of our Lord’s directives. Hence, all teaching from God—including how to worship Him—is inherently tied to what Christ has done for us.

So, in reality, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Matthew 22:37-39, and Matthew 23:23 **do not teach** the idea that matters of “lesser” importance need not be taken seriously or scrupulously obeyed. The fact that Christians have questioned the number

of cups to be used in distributing the fruit of the vine, or whether we should support orphan homes, or whether we can use instruments in worship—none of these matters establishes the conclusion that we cannot arrive at truth on each of them and ascertain whether they are obligatory in God’s sight or purely optional. It is true that not everything in Scripture is plain or clear,³ and we don’t understand everything; nevertheless, **how to worship God is not one of those things.** After all, either God approves of multiple communion containers, or He doesn’t. Either God sanctions mechanical instruments in worship to Him, or He doesn’t. Can we ascertain the truth on such matters? Yes, we can—and we must (John 8:32; 1 John 4:1). We **can** distinguish between matters of option and matters of obligation.⁴ In Romans 14, Paul speaks to that very point, addressing various doctrines that are not obligatory for Christians. does not pertain to doctrinal matters that are obligatory. Continuing to observe Jewish feasts and eating meat used in pagan sacrifices were **optional** and not to be bound on others. Those who practiced them were not to approach them as if they are required by God or, in the case of Jewish observances, that they are still in effect as far as God’s laws/requirements are concerned. Romans 14 teaches us today that we should not stand in judgment (as a judge) on the brother that engages in **optional** matters; but, obviously, we **are** to judge on matters of obligation (1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:5,15-20; John 7:24). Singing is obligatory, but playing instruments is an unauthorized addition of man.

EQUAL IMPORTANCE?

Some say that churches of Christ have inappropriately emphasized certain doctrines (like instrumental music) and are guilty of leaving

the impression that every law from God is of equal importance. No doubt some individuals have done so. But what churches of Christ historically have maintained is that if we truly love God, we will obey Him; we will be concerned about **every matter that He places before us**. Similarly, if parents give a list to their teen before they leave for work, telling the child to perform **all** the itemized tasks, including carry out the trash, vacuum the floor, clean up his room, and especially see that he spends one hour on his homework, would he be justified when they returned if he says that he neglected the list in order to give attention to his homework—since it was of first importance?

Having misconstrued the notion of “weightier matters” and matters “of first importance,” a person will inevitably conceptualize Bible doctrines in terms of his own idea of “importance.” Those doctrines that he does not deem as most important (like whether to incorporate instrumental music) he will proceed to classify as considerably less important and, therefore, optional. This false hermeneutical procedure fails to take into account that, “**All** your words are true; **all** your righteous laws are eternal” and “**all** your commands are righteous” (Psalm 119:160,172, NIV; cf. 119:6,86,151). It fails to reckon with the fact that the **entirety** of God’s laws and commandments are “holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). It fails to recognize that Jesus said we are to do **everything** we have been told to do—still counting ourselves as unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). And have we forgotten the “Great Commission” that Jesus articulated Himself, requiring potential converts “to observe **all things** that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20)? Did He intend for this command to be limited only to His death, burial, and resurrection?

One must be very careful about imposing one’s own prejudices on Scripture in an effort to ascertain whether some commands of God are of “lesser” importance. In the first century church, what were the “big deals”? The early church was plagued with the issues of circumcision, keeping the Law of Moses, and eating meat offered to idols. Even though these issues were not directly tied to the death, burial, and resurrection, they merited the extensive amount of Scripture, time, and effort expended on them at the time. But these are not the concerns of today. Therefore it follows that there may be “big deals” today that are legitimately big deals (in the sense that they threaten peace, unity, and harmony, and they endanger the souls of those who practice them)—including the essentiality of baptism vs. faith only, corrupting worship with instruments, and sanctioning homosexuality and transgenderism.

JUST READING THROUGH THE BIBLE

The fact is: if I were to open the New Testament and simply read through it, taking note of those matters that seem to be “big deals,” what would I conclude? Most certainly, the central doctrine of Christianity is the person of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. Without the person and sacrifice of Christ, there is no Christianity. However, without any doubt, I would also come away with a strong realization that I must **obey God in everything**. I would be keenly struck by the fact that I have no right to introduce into the worship of God any manmade innovations or practices **that God has not authorized**. I would also be impressed with the fact that, if I really love Jesus, I must conform myself to the entirety of His Word (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 14:15; 15:14; Romans 6:16; 1 John 5:3; etc.). I would gain the exact same impression from the Old Testament

(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Indeed, if I read Genesis 6:1ff., would I come away with a strong sense of how critical it was for Noah to follow God’s instructions carefully—to the letter? If I read the Pentateuch, would I get the idea that God expected the Jews to build the tabernacle, with all of its accoutrements, according to divine specifications—without addition or alteration (Exodus 35:29; 36:1,5; 39:42-43)? Hebrews 8:5 states: “This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you **make everything according to the pattern shown you** on the mountain.’” Indeed, the nation was warned: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2; cf. 12:32).

The fact of the matter is that if a person sits down and reads the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation with a view toward understanding how God would have a Christian to worship Him, one would never get the idea that God desires use of instrumental praise—since He never so indicates that desire. On the other hand, one would **clearly and unmistakably** conclude that God desires that worshippers **sing**.⁵ Simply read every verse in the New Testament that says anything about music. There are only 10 (omitting Revelation⁶): Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 2:12, Hebrews 13:15, and James 5:13. That’s it! And **all** refer exclusively to **vocal** music.⁷ Once a person buys into the notion that some things are “no big deal,” he has set himself up to undermine matters that God deems significant. Observe further: If believer’s baptism and weekly communion are matters “of first importance” because they are tied to the death, burial, and resurrection,

but acappella singing is not, what about the songs that speak of the death of Christ? If instruments are unimportant or “no big deal” because they are not tied to the death, burial, and resurrection, what about when they are used to accompany songs that **are** about the death, burial, and resurrection?

Obedience Has Always Been Crucial

So you see, obedience to every command is a “big deal” throughout the whole of Scripture. God would never give anyone a command that He did not expect to be obeyed. **None** of God’s laws are trivial. What is so glorious about the work of Christ on the cross is that we can be forgiven for our disobedience—if we access that forgiveness according to God’s own directives. The “big deal” philosophy subtly shifts the glory of the Gospel from “Thank God a miserable sinner like me can be forgiven for violating God’s laws!” to “Now we don’t have to worry about obedience! We can have instruments in our worship to God Almighty!”⁸

Many, many religious people in our day are characterized by this attitude. Their perceptions of God and His grace serve to minimize the necessity of being overly concerned about strict, loving obedience to every command of God. This attitude is manifested in the idea that arriving at correct doctrine is irrelevant to establishing and maintaining a right relationship with God. But this is precisely what the Bible teaches. Doctrinal purity does not necessarily guarantee a right relationship with God, but a right relationship with God is impossible without doctrinal purity. **Both** “spirit and truth” (i.e., proper attitude **and** proper adherence to truth—John 4:24) are essential to a right relationship with God.⁹ Even if some religious individuals give the impression that they have gone “overboard” on some alleged minor issue, with insufficient attention to proper attitude, no

solution is achieved by abandoning, compromising, or softening adherence to Truth in an effort to appease those who wish to advance an agenda. **The existence of Pharisees in the church most certainly does not justify corrupting divine worship with manmade mechanical contraptions.**

The very nature of God and truth is at stake in this discussion. Truth, by its very definition, is narrow, specific, fixed, and technical. God is a God of truth Who operates within the parameters of truth. Since He is God, He does not, and cannot, vary from truth and right. Man's definition of what constitutes a "big deal" rarely matches God's definition. More often than not, the very items that humans brush aside as unimportant and trivial, are those things upon which God places great importance. Herein lies the crux of man's problem. **We** decide what **we** think is important, and then proceed to structure **our** religion around those self-stylized premises, **assuming** divine sanction and "grace." Never mind the fact that "it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Never mind the fact that "the wisdom of this world" is foolish to God (1 Corinthians 1:20). And never mind the fact that such an attitude and approach betrays great arrogance.

In everyday living, we understand very well the principle that those things that appear to be trivial or mere technicalities can be crucial to survival. The incorrect dosage of medicine in a medical emergency—by even milligrams—can mean the difference between life and death. A simple act of texting while driving one's car is not only illegal, it can cost a person his life. One could label each of these examples as mere "technicalities" that, in comparison to other matters that might be deemed of greater importance, are no "big deal," but doing so does

not alter the magnitude of their importance or their dire consequences.

In biblical history, the same principle holds true. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden for eating from **one** piece of fruit from **one** tree (Genesis 3). Nadab and Abihu—the right boys, at the right place, at the right time, with the right censers and the right incense—nevertheless were destroyed for incorporating **foreign** fire into their incense offering (Leviticus 10:1-2). Moses was excluded from entrance into the Promised Land because of his **one** mistake at Kadesh—striking a rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20:7-12). Saul was deposed as king for sparing the best sheep and cattle, and the life of **one** individual out of an entire nation (1 Samuel 15). Uzzah was struck dead for merely reaching out and steadying the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:6-7). God rejected Uzziah because he entered the temple, merely to burn incense (2 Chronicles 26). God struck both Ananias and Sapphira dead in the very first church of Christ on the planet for telling one lie. Observe that not one of these individuals was condemned because they denied the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. They were rejected by God because they deviated, ever so slightly, from His stipulated instructions. **Human** perception would consider one bite of one piece of fruit to be "no big deal."

These incidents are no more "technical" or "trivial" than New Testament regulations pertaining to vocal (as opposed to instrumental) music in worship (Ephesians 5:19), unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (as opposed to other kinds of food) at the Lord's Table (Matthew 26:26-29), and the qualifications of elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13). We must refrain from attempting to second-guess God, or deciding for ourselves what **we** think is important to Him and, therefore, a "big deal" since "that

which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). We need to be attentive to “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27)—even those portions that humans deem peripheral or “no big deal.” When people are clamoring, “Those matters are not salvation issues,” or “those issues are no big deal,” we need to reaffirm the words of Jesus: “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23).¹⁰

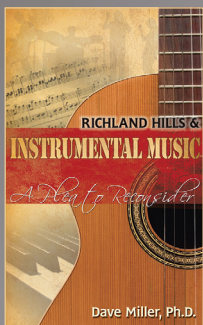
ENDNOTES

- 1 When a preacher mocks those who would suggest that a person will be lost eternally for worshipping God with manmade instruments, he not only fails to recognize how often God has condemned others for much less, he also evades the fact that he, himself, admits that **some** people are going to go to hell. So the only issue is what must one do to cause himself to be lost eternally? Most progressive preachers are still willing to admit that those who deny Christ will be lost in hell. Some still believe that one must be baptized for the remission of sins—or he will be lost eternally in hell. So why the disconnect on the matter of how to worship God—when so much of the Bible addresses this extremely vital element of receiving God’s approval?
- 2 This philosophy essentially narrows the meaning of “gospel” and pits it against the rest of the Bible. It is true that the “good news” pertains to the death of Christ for our sins. However, the New Testament clearly goes out of its way to avoid leaving the very impression that digressives have latched onto. The entire Bible is God’s doctrine (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). A number of expressions are used interchangeably in the Scriptures, demonstrating that all of the words of the Bible make up divine doctrine, including: the word of the Lord, the word of God, the word of His grace, the doctrine of Christ, the apostles’ doctrine, the law of Christ, the word of truth, the new testament, the gospel, the faith, the truth, Jesus, the word of the kingdom, etc. These and other expressions are parallel designations that are used to refer to the same body of information, i.e., the totality of Christian doctrine.
- 3 However, 2 Peter 3:16 does not say that Paul’s writings could not be understood. If that be the case, why in the world would God have given us those writings? The passage states that “some” (certainly not all or even most) things are “hard” to understand—but **not impossible** to understand. Isn’t it ironic that those who would use this passage to argue that whether mechanical instruments can be used in the worship of God is one of those things that we can’t understand—since the passage anticipates such thinking: “in which are some things hard to understand, which **untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction**, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” The fact is that God expects **everyone** to devote serious study to His Word so that they **can** understand what God **expects and requires** them to understand (John 7:17; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15).
- 4 See the excellent book by Thomas B. Warren that addresses this issue: *When Is An “Example” Binding?* <http://www.ncpress.org/store/>.
- 5 While the meaning of the term *psallo* in Ephesians 5:19 has been hotly debated, the fact is that its meaning is **not unclear or uncertain**. It only became an issue when those who sought to justify instruments thought they had discovered a proof text. You don’t have to know Greek or history. You would be hard pressed to find any English translation that inserts instruments into Ephesians 5:19. For a discussion, see Dave Miller (2007), *Richland Hills and Instrumental Music* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 55-78. For a free downloadable copy, go to: http://apologeticspress.org/pdfs/e-books_pdf/InstrumentalMusic.pdf.
- 6 See the detailed discussion of why the instruments mentioned in the book of Revelation **cannot** be literal, in Miller, 2007, pp. 46-49.
- 7 The claim that none of the New Testament passages that refer to singing pertains to the formal church worship assembly is untrue. For a full refutation of this claim, see Miller, 2007, pp. 39-42. Here is a brief summary: (1) Ephesians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:16 use plural participles indicating action taken by the entire congregation collectively; (2) the reflexive pronoun used reciprocally indicates a plurality of individuals gathered to perform the action of singing together; (3) The phrase “in you” (*en humin*) in Colossians 3:16 is the favorite expression used by Paul to refer to the church assembly; (4) Paul contrasted

their **assembly** with his absence from that **assembly** in Colossians 2:5; (5) Paul called for the Colossian and Laodicean letters to be read aloud in the **assembly** (Colossians 4:16). The fact that these epistles contain material that pertains to everyday life does not exclude the fact that **some** of the material refers to corporate assembly worship activity.

- 8 One is reminded of the recent “Women’s March on Washington.” When marchers were asked why they were marching, they responded with vague, ambiguous explanations like “we are showing solidarity,” “we are defending civil rights,” “we are marching for freedom.” All such claims are subtle diversions designed to dignify their cause in the same way that Satan represents himself through evasion—“and no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). To be honest, what they should have said was: “We want to be free to have as much sex as we desire with whomever we desire and the right to kill our unborn babies that result!” “We want boys to have the right to go into the girls’ restrooms if they desire to do so!” “We want men to retain the right to marry men, and women the right to marry women.” Similarly, if those who want instruments were forthright, they would just come right out and state plainly: “We demand the right to have praise teams, instruments in worship, female leaders, waving arms, etc.—and we don’t want you telling us we’re wrong!” Instead, it’s so much more palatable to say: “We mustn’t major in minors,” “We need to stay centered on the Gospel and matters of first importance,” “We need to focus on Jesus,” “You must not be pharisaical.” “Instruments are not a big deal.”
- 9 For a discussion of the meaning of “in spirit and in truth,” see Dave Miller (1996), *Piloting the Strait* (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications), pp. 182-185.
- 10 Lest the reader draw the wrong conclusion, the author fully acknowledges that no one is perfect and that we all sin—even when we are living a faithful Christian life. [See an outstanding two-part sermon on “Security in Christ” at: [http://apologeticspress.org/MediaSearch.aspx?search=Frank Chesser, M.S.](http://apologeticspress.org/MediaSearch.aspx?search=Frank+Chesser,+M.S.)] But there is a major difference between respecting all of God’s laws, though making mistakes and sinning along the way, versus promoting the notion that **not all** of God’s laws matter.

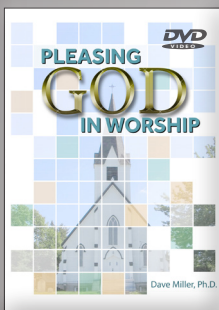
NOTES



For a more indepth study of the use of instruments in worship, consider reading *Richland Hills & Instrumental Music: A Plea to Reconsider*.

For order information, or to download a **free** pdf copy of this book, visit the following Web site:

www.richlandhillsandinstrumentalmusic.com



QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN SIX SESSIONS:

- How does the Bible authorize human behavior?
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Dave Miller
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

dave@apologeticspress.org