

# 'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' - Knowing Jesus More! July 19th, 2020

*Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team, and whole Church Family,*

*"For we live by faith, not by sight."  
2 Corinthians 5:7-9 (NIV)  
"He put a new song in my mouth,  
a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear the LORD  
and put their trust in Him."  
Psalm 40:3 (NIV)*



Did you know that Christians in California can't sing this Sunday? What if that happened to us here in Pennsylvania? The question I can't help but ask is: "How can I keep from singing?" Last week I shared some Biblical reasons why we should sing and worship. Who would have ever believed that churches today in America would be banned from singing? Yet, it has happened! Many Christian leaders are speaking out against California Gov. Gavin Newsom's order prohibiting singing in churches. Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, is leading the charge, saying it's



"completely discriminatory." The virus is more easily transmitted indoors and singing releases miniscule droplets that can carry the disease. True, not a problem. So, does public cheering and shouting at sporting events release miniscule droplets? Does not chanting and yelling at protests in the streets release miniscule droplets? Of course! So here is my point: This governor isn't just prohibiting fairly all and every public expression and cause to spread the virus, he is targeting only churches. As if groups of Christians are responsible for the increased numbers of coronavirus in California? Doesn't that remind anyone of Nero blaming the Christians for burning Rome?

The ban may well end up in court as there are differing opinions on its legality, with some groups arguing it infringes on religious freedom while others believe it's constitutional, especially during a pandemic. I believe that if you are not putting a ban on riot shouting, publicly loud expression at all sporting events, and all public singing events, then you are being discriminatory! Why can it be wrong for a group of 100 believers to sing "A Mighty Fortress is our God" within their own building, but it is okay for the NBA Golden State Warriors to be shouting and yelling in public during the opening of the new basketball season? The California ban was one of a number of restrictions on indoor businesses and gatherings put in place last week by Gov. Gavin Newsom amid

fast-rising virus cases and hospitalizations. It's unclear if any similar prohibition on singing exists in the United States, though there is one, believe it or not, right now in England. If church singing is banned in this way, what will that lead to in others areas of religious freedom? Isn't that some how crossing over the "separation of church and state" which we hear thrown at Christians when they want to read the Bible and pray in schools?



Wake up believers! Is it becoming so hard now to see that the Lord is setting up for His returning? How are we not watching such things as "cashless" businesses and forcing Wal-Mart and Target shoppers to only use cashless means to purchase in their stores? How is this not reminding us about the "end times" in Revelation 13 when it says, "He [the antichrist] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor,

free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (vs. 17)? I thought I would never see the day such things as "do not sing in church" would happen!? But they are happening!

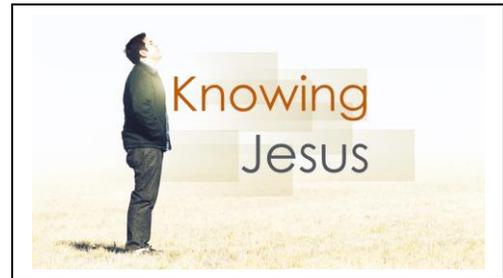
The Bible is clear that singing is a central part of the Christian faith. And when suddenly that freedom is taken away, one becomes extremely aware of how important singing is to our faith. In the New Testament, Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." How is it that this governor doesn't see the implication and bias that is being thrown at churches? My son Greg is being affected with leading songs for the Cadet chapels. He's heard it said, "Don't mess with Amazing Grace!" The American Center for Law and Justice, a religious freedom law firm says it will sue. "We can't stand by and watch as California strips its believers of their God-given right to raise their voices in worship and praise," executive director Jordan Sekulow said on the center's website.

So suddenly, welcome to the world of "church music" controversy. Everyone seems to have an opinion about the music in church these days. It seems there is one thing that people (even people who know nothing about music) feel qualified to speak about is the music we use in our churches! We hear, "That song is too slow!... Too many hymns!... It's too loud!... I can't sing that high!... Why can't we use the hymnal instead of the screens?... Pastor, if you want me

to get rid of that organ I will, and I won't tell anyone who did it!" On and on it goes! Also I don't have to tell you that more than a few of our area churches have had deep, harmful schisms over music issues. Music can be a danger zone in our churches and without a biblical, discerning mindset, we will inevitably encounter problems. Before we lose our God-given freedoms, let's stop and appreciate why and how we find songs and music to sing.

### **1. What does the Bible say?**

When it comes to the matter of discernment in our church music, the first question we want to ask is, "What does the Bible say?" I think we can all agree that what the Bible says should govern how we think about music and if we can sing in church. But the reality is, the Bible says very little to help us define the "parameters" of the style or kind of church music. It just tells us to sing! It never tells us what kinds are right or wrong to sing.



We know the making of musical instruments began in Genesis 4:21 and we know that choirs and instruments were used by God's people in worship and even in war! (Num. 10:10; 2 Chron. 5:12-14; Josh. 6:4; 2 Chron. 20, etc.). We know that musicians played vital roles in temple worship all through the Old Testament. When we turn to the New Testament, we read that our Lord and His disciples sang hymns together (Mark 14:26). We can surmise that there must have been music involved in the believers worship (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 2:46-47; Acts 16:25). When Paul gives commands to involve worship in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20 he references three categories of music: "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." That is all that is said. It doesn't say what century those songs were written or if they were classical style or hand clapping-style. When we get to the throne of heaven, Revelation 5:8-10 records lots of singing and songs (Rev. 14:2-3; Rev. 15:2-4). Again, all we see is the command to sing and the expressions of worship, but we do not see a list of what songs to sing.

### **2. What's missing?**

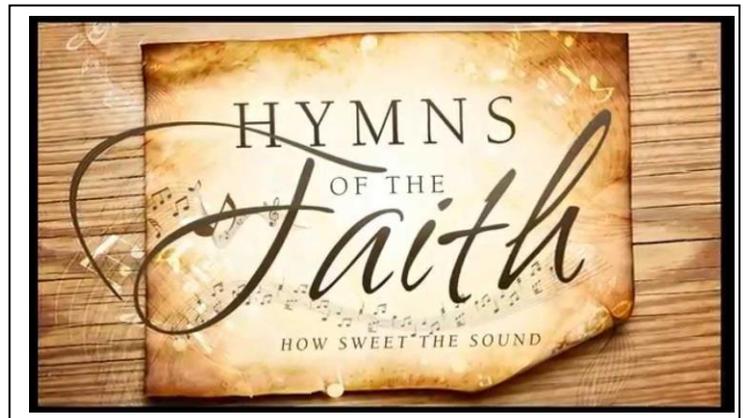
Isn't it interesting there is essentially no specific instruction in Scripture, including in the New Testament, concerning the regulation and usage of music? Even in the Epistles you never see the writers instruct about music in the church! We only know we are to sing all kinds, and in all ways, and in all circumstances. The conclusion is evident: "The Bible is nearly silent about what kind of music we should sing in church." This ban should have us thinking about our right to sing, not which hymns or styles to sing. So, let me say at the risk of being criticized: the fact that the New Testament says almost nothing regulating music argues the point that music should not be so controversial in our churches! We must be careful of making personal preferences and personal likes the standard for the church when the Bible, our final authority, is lacking in giving us directives. Why does God do that? So to

allow all kinds of music expression! Think about the fact that God loves to hear the praise of His people even if it is only Africans clapping and jumping up and down, or Asians, quietly and slowly listening to one song leader sing. God loves all the expressions of prayer and song from His people if it is from the heart. That said, should we just yell out tasteless and bad songs? Do we sing off-key? What should we do? Just tolerate only music sung when there are twenty people dressed in choir robes singing stiffly to an organ, or do we allow jamming head-banging drums playing stuff in church?

### **3. Who decides if we can sing, or what to sing in church?**

Certainly not an unsaved governor! Nor some politician or doctors on the board of the CDC. Since the Bible doesn't definitively address the form of music in our local churches, who then should decide these matters? It is my conviction that each church needs to regulate its usage of music under the careful, watchful discernment of godly, biblically qualified elders, couched in the context of the overriding law of love. Thus, what is right from church to church is valid. I don't appreciate in years gone by, those evangelists who went about preaching during the 70's and 80's that certain instruments and styles of music were "the only right ones."

Drums are not from the devil nor are there certain songs that cause you to do drugs and drink. Some songs like "Amazing Grace" were taken by John Newton and fitted from the bar tunes which were being sung. Indeed, one thing we know for sure, is that the Apostle Paul detailed at length who is to lead and shepherd local churches, and yet he remained very ambiguous about much of the form



and structure in our churches. In fact, did you know that through the years some people have looked at Colossians 1:15-19 (our text for our message today) and have theorized that it was an early church hymn about Jesus? So who would determine that it was a good song to sing in Colosse? The elders and leaders at that church. But if the Roman church leaders didn't like the song, they didn't have to sing it. Spiritual leaders, especially pastors, will and must be the influencers and overseers of the music in our churches.

**4. What are the guiding principles for our music at Palisades Community Bible Church today?** Last week I shared how singing and songs are a vital part of our worship. I want to share with you about how we discern which songs are to be sung in church. Here are the ones I've used and talked about with our worship team and leaders:

- Christ is to be exalted and given glory in our church. This includes all music! (Eph. 3:21; Col. 1:18). So we first ask if that music or song will fit this first standard. That said, it still doesn't address how fast or slow, or what kind of instruments should be played.
- Singing is not an option. It is a response to the imperative of being filled with the Spirit. So what this world doesn't understand is that their bans against singing are going against what we teach as being filled and following the Spirit of God. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 both connect the ministry of the Word of God and music. Preaching and teaching, and music function together. And in Psalm 150 all manner of instruments are used: cymbals, drums, stringed instruments, wind instruments. All mannerisms are used: clapping, dancing, and movement. It is not wrong or sinful if music makes you clap, raise your hands, or tap your toe. It is not sinful to dance before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:14, Ecclesiastes 3:4; Psalm 30:11; Jeremiah 31:13; Psalm 149:3 just to cite a few Scripture). Music that causes movement is not sinful. Music that does cause you to fall asleep may be another issue but not for church.
- In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul clearly instructs that what we do in our worship services, praying, including singing of songs, is to be done for the edification and building up of the body of Christ. So when you look at a song, you need to be measuring and thinking to yourself, not "I don't like the beat" but if the words and style help you to think about growing in the Lord. Now, before you answer that, be honest to admit that personal likes and dislikes shouldn't be where we start. Some songs and lyrics will still edify others even if it doesn't edify you.
- Philippians 4:5 gives us a list of criteria to filter what we let run through our minds and hearts. It says, "And now, brothers, as I close this letter, let me say this one more thing: Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about" (Phil. 4:8-8 The Living Bible). That said, recognize that you are looking for the theme and bottom line of a song, not measuring a physical response. Classical Music is not somehow better than Christian Rock because it is older. Remember, "new" is not synonymous with "bad!" Be careful not throw to out "hymns" because they are old, or "spiritual songs" because they are "new."
- There is a principle of clarity taught by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:7, 19. Music that is not clear in both meaning and presentation should be judged fairly before you dismiss it or accept it.

- There is a principle of “singability” taught in 1 Cor. 14:33, 40. If the whole of the congregation can’t sing it together, because the syncopation is all over the place, then perhaps it isn’t a song to sing as a congregation. Maybe the song features the solo voice and should be used as a special, but don’t expect the “whoa” and “ooohs” to be sung by the whole congregation.
- There is allowance for different styles and speeds of music. Eph. 5:18-19 reminds us that we can sing hymns, songs, or spiritual songs. So if there is no piano, it isn’t wrong for the congregation in South America to sing with guitars; nor is it wrong for the congregation in Europe to sing with symphony. But that may not fit the gifts and skills at PCBC. We really must follow how God has gifted our church congregation. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 reminds us to recognize that we are not all alike, nor do we have the same function in church with our gifts and talents. This is true in our music ministries. There must be an appreciation for a variety of gifts, talents, and abilities. I remember growing up in my home country church and enjoying the occasional “clarinet” solo from a young budding student, or the trumpet solos of our young Greg. Appropriate use of differing people takes wisdom and practice.
- Romans 12:15 speaks to the importance of understanding the occasion and emotional condition of the congregation. There are some services where it is very inappropriate to end the service with an “upbeat or fast” song if I’ve preached a gospel invitation. Yet, also there are times when we should leave with upbeat hearts. During this reopening of the church from Covid-19 I’ve given the music team express instruction that I want us to be toe tapping, hand clapping, rejoicing, celebrating when we leave church because it is important to gather after being locked down for months. Have you sensed that each week since June when we opened? And hasn’t it made an impact on us? Effective music ministers to the weary as well as the rejoicing.

How our congregation sings is a powerful testimony about our joy in Christ. If we are giving off the testimony that we must be dull and boring, or professional and impractical, stage performance or selfish stage show, then we are not doing our job. Does the culture influence church music? Yes. There are some wonderful new songs coming out that we’ve been singing because of the great theology. Newsboy’s song “*Hallelujah for the Cross!*” Another example would be Andrew Peterson’s immensely popular song “*He is Worthy!*” Keith and Kristin Getty are influencing our hymnody with their seemingly limitless writing and composing of many beautiful psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs such as “*He Will Hold Me Fast*” and “*In Christ Alone*”. Our present new hymns that we’ve started to sing are “*Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery*” by Matthew

Merker and from Cityalight, “*Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me.*” Rest assured, we are committed to keeping, learning, and singing the good old hymns such as “*Amazing Grace,*” and “*Great Is Thy Faithfulness.*” The Psalmist wrote so appropriately, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord... Come into His presence with singing... enter His courts with praise!... Bless His name!” (Psalm 100). May it be that we are growing and appreciating the importance of singing and worshiping. Keep the church as a whole in prayer during these days. Watch out for those who are trying to take away small expressions of freedom. It isn’t right that we are letting our expressions for worship be taken or slipped away just because of a pandemic. The world will not be consistent nor will it be fair. Don’t let this world press us into its way of thinking and worshiping! (Romans 12:2). So loved ones, “How can we keep from singing His praise?”

Will you pray with me?

***“Father above, of life, of joy, of music and song, we fall before Your throne at the wonders and mysteries of Jesus our Lord and Savior. We adore His beauty, His redemption, His grace and His love. Help us be a church that is characterized not by “perfect pitch and practice” but by hearts of explosive joy and child-like praise for all Christ has done for us. Make us a people who sing! Make us shout Hallelujah! Make us a Spirit-filled and joy-filled congregation along this 611 corridor. Bring into our congregation those with the gifts and talents to keep growing our music ministry. Help us draw near You with our praise! Help us honestly allow differences in our music styles and expressions. Help us draw together and sing as one in Christ. We give praise that Christ is supreme! Oh God, You are the lover of our souls. Faithfully, You have extended Your hands toward us. Yet we have been, at times, drifters and distant. But we long to know You more! Oh Master, this day we acknowledge our most wonderful times are those spent close to You. When our hearts are near to You, we are partaking of the nectar of life. Increase our joy in the cross of Christ, and our wonder and admiration for all that was accomplished there, until our hearts melt and our self-worship gives way to delight in our salvation. As true worship fills our souls, may we grow into people who swiftly turn away from our own desires to love others as we have been so greatly loved. We pray in the name our glorious Redeemer, amen.”***



**Praising and singing,  
Pastor Corvin <><**

Quote: “How important is the nearness of our God? The summary

thought of Asaph's revelation, and the reminder to us in Psalm 73:28 is, "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good." So believers, let's settle this truth once and for all: 'it is the nearness of God that produces our good.' Christianity was never designed by God to be sustained by nice people trying to appear good. We're not that good. We're not that clever. And we're not that nice. The only thing that can sustain true Christianity is true union with Jesus Christ. It is nearness to Him in all things that produces our spiritual fruit.

If we are honest, we will admit that, apart from the influence and work of God, there is nothing morally superior or remarkably virtuous about our lives. Our flesh has the same carnal passions as do people in the world; our soul carries within it the same insecurities and fears. Apart from the influence of Christ in us, there's no difference between Christians and non-Christians (except that Christians, when living separate from God's presence, can be more obnoxious). It's only our relationship with the Lord that keeps us from fulfilling the lusts and desires of the flesh, for apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Therefore the strength of our walk does not originate from within ourselves; rather it comes from our relationship with Christ. Our virtue, if it can be defined as such, is that we have learned to prioritize seeking God; our character is the offspring of our oneness with Jesus. By this I mean that not only is Jesus first on our list of priorities, but also His influence rules over all our priorities. He inspires love in our relationships; His voice becomes the conviction in our integrity. God has made "Christ Jesus" to be to us "wisdom . . . and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Thus the God-seeker desires to find the Lord's pleasure drawn to every aspect of his soul. He also knows that, should an area of his heart exist in isolation from God, he will remain vulnerable to manipulation by the enemy in that area. So let me underscore the psalmist's truth, and let us say with our own voice of conviction: it is the nearness of our Christ that is our good." ... Francis Frangipane, July 12<sup>th</sup> Sermon on Nearness of Christ.

