
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What's the difference between an "aid" and an "addition" to the worship?**

Galatians 1:8

⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Proverbs 30:6

⁶ Do not add to [God's] words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Because we are told here to not add to the word of God, we in the church of Christ do not use mechanical instruments of music in our worship. The reason is because, although instruments were used in the OT, they are not mentioned in the NT. Using instruments of music in NT worship would violate the command to not "add" anything to the word of God. The same principle is taught in Mt 15:9 and Heb 8:5. We may not add anything to NT worship that is not found written in the NT scriptures. Therefore, mechanical instruments of music are sinful to use today in worship to God.

But here's an interesting question: If mechanical instruments are sinful because they constitute an addition to the word of God, why does the church of Christ use song books? Aren't these additions also?

This is a very good and legitimate question.

The answer is: **Song books are not sinful nor forbidden because they are not additions to the word of God; they are merely an aid in carrying out the command of God.**

What, then, is the difference between an "*aid*" and an "*addition*"?

An "addition" – alters a particular action; the fundamental composition of a command gets changed when an addition occurs.

An "aid" – does not alter anything; an aid merely assists people in carrying out the command exactly as it was given.

Let me give some examples to clarify.

- 1) Suppose a man takes his automobile to a service center to have the oil changed. The mechanic may use *a wrench and a funnel* to "aid" him in doing this work. The command or instructions to change the oil are not altered just because a wrench and funnel are used. However, if the mechanic decides to change the spark plugs as well, he has added something to the original instructions. The car owner would be rightfully upset if the mechanic did this without prior authorization. It is true that the mechanic did change the oil, but it is also true that he did something else besides change the oil.

Let me give a Bible example.

- 2) The Lord commanded His people to observe the Lord's supper with unleavened bread, a cup, and fruit of the vine (1 Cor 11:23-25). If the church uses *a plate* to "aid" in passing the bread, nothing has been altered. The church is still eating from the loaf exactly as the Lord prescribed. However, if the church should decide to use unleavened bread topped with tomato sauce and pepperoni, the congregation has "*added*" to the instructions given by the Lord. This addition is sinful because it alters the command of the Lord by adding ingredients not authorized by the Lord. It is true that the congregation would have eaten unleavened bread, but it is also true that more than unleavened bread was eaten.

Now, with these two examples in mind, let's apply this to the music of the church. The church is commanded to sing:

Ephesians 5:19

¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

"*Singing*" means "*making music with the voice*." Because the command specifies singing as the form of music, we must not alter that command to offer something different than singing.

If the congregation uses a song book to "aid" everyone in singing the same words, nothing has been altered. Either with or without songbooks, everyone is still singing and nothing more.

However, should the congregation decide to use a piano or organ, the basic command of the Lord has been altered. Now they are no longer just singing as Eph 5:19 teaches. Now the church has "*added*" something. Now there are two kinds of music – both vocal and instrumental. It is

true that people are singing – which means "*making music with the voice*" – but they are also now doing something more. Now they are also making music with an instrument. They have added something that was not authorized in the scripture.

The Bible recognizes the difference between vocal singing and playing on instruments. Just read Ps 87:7. The fact that instruments are missing from the NT scriptures is proof that the Lord did not want them in NT worship. Mechanical instruments, then, are not an "*aid*" – they are an "*addition*" to the word of God and are therefore sinful. Any congregation today using mechanical instruments of music are violating the revealed will of God.

I hope this explains why the church of Christ does not sing with instruments of music. We all need the mercy of God in judgment, but mercy is given only to those who obey the Lord's commands (Ps 25:10; 103:17-18).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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