

So, You Want to Be in the Band?

By Don Potter

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It has been my experience that there are usually a few people in a worship band who really shouldn't be there. Yet I've also found out it's hard to tell people "No" when they believe God is calling them to sing or play an instrument. They may not have any musical ability, but they love to worship God. Isn't that good enough?

Besides the Scripture that exhorts us to play skillfully before the Lord (see Psalm 33:3), there is another reason to set limits on who can participate on the worship band: some people are actually endangering themselves by insisting they belong on stage. Of course, filling the band with greatly talented people who have no heart for God is probably even more dangerous. But that is not my focus here.

Called or Appointed?

Those who assume a position in the worship band without really being called by God could be setting themselves up for a fierce attack from the enemy. I have seen many such musicians fall under that attack, and at times even lose their families. Playing in the worship band is not just a fun thing to do on Sundays. It is a serious assault on the devil himself. Unless you are appointed by God for that position of battle, you may not have the grace to survive. Seek God earnestly before accepting an invitation to be a part of the worship team! Even if it is a leader who asks you, don't be impulsive! Seek God first. You may even be called to be a singer or musician used for worship, yet be way ahead of God's timing.

I was a professional musician for twenty-five years before I began to play in a worship band, and I was still about five years ahead of God. I unintentionally hurt a lot of people. Everyone thought it would be great to have a professional musician in the band, and I thought I was going to be a big help, too. Nevertheless, within three years the band had fallen apart and most of the musicians hated me. My talent was often confused with anointing and my character was not able to handle the position my talent put me in.

Eventually I learned that talent and gifting are very different. Talent is a natural ability to do something well if you work at it. Gifting is supernatural. It requires all your talent to be placed in God's hands, for the benefit of His kingdom and not your own self-promotion.

Check Your Motives

Before you take the job of musician or singer in a worship band, you need to examine the motives of your heart. Here are some questions to ask yourself or others who are trying to get in the band:

- Do you think it would be fun to be on stage?
- Are you just trying to help out and meet a need?
- Are you trying to recapture your youth, when you used to sing or play an instrument?
- Are you just learning to play, and hoping to get some experience or free lessons?
- Do you feel you could worship God better from the stage than from the congregation?
- Are you unconsciously trying to gain a good reputation or impress people by playing in the band?
- Is your motivation to draw attention to yourself or to the Lord?

Although there are many more questions to ask yourself before entering the public worship arena, there really is only one that counts: are you in the worship band or choir as an act of obedience to God? Everyone is called to praise God and sing to His Holy name, but not everyone is called to be in the worship band.

Everyone is called to intercede and to battle with the powers of darkness, but not everyone is called to take a Davidic position and war on his or her instrument. Some motives sound spiritual, but are not. It may seem noble to focus on the congregation and what will make them happy, but if you do so you are worshipping them and not God. The call of a worship musician or singer is to minister to God, not the people. If the presence of God is our focus, He will come and bless the congregation a lot more than anything you can do!

This may sound harsh, but we are coming into a time when it will be extremely hazardous to play around with worship. A church would be better off with just one called and equipped musician, than a band full of people with good intentions but no calling. In many churches playing in the worship band is the only job that seems to have no spiritual requirements tied to it. If the spiritual life of the pastor is in question, he's a goner. If the elders are not in right standing with God, they will be removed. Yet, if a person owns a guitar, it's no problem getting a job playing in the worship band.

Worship or Entertainment?

The most difficult thing to determine about one's own heart is, "am I really concerned about reaching my Savior with this praise, or am I just trying to entertain these needy people?". Once the idea of entertaining gets loose in the church, people can sometimes feel there is no anointing just because they are not pleased with the quality of the music. They've had a hard week at work and need a little relief from the pressures of life, so they look forward to the idea of sitting back and being entertained on Sunday.

This leads to watching worship instead of participating. I don't think it is wrong to enjoy watching someone worship God. But if you as a singer or musician feel you have to live up to your own reputation as a great worshipper, you've just crossed a dangerous line; from worship to entertainment.

The body of Christ is in need of real Holy Spirit experiences, so we can tell the difference between anointing and entertainment. Those experiences will come more often when someone is called, gifted and anointed to be a leader or player in the worship band.

Chosen by God

Either you are chosen by God to have a position on the worship team or you are not. Even if you are chosen, you may have family obligations or other responsibilities that signal it is not yet God's time for you to start. If you have a heart for the musicians but don't sense a call to be one, maybe your role should be intercession. Perhaps your interest is meant to stimulate prayer for them rather than a position on the stage for you.

If you feel you are supposed to be in the band but someone else has your place, go to God and ask Him to bring discernment and wisdom. It has been my experience that God will make a way for you to be there if it is truly His will. Be careful not to pray against that person, even if you believe they are being insensitive to what God is wanting to do. Be sure of this: the Lord wants the right people in the right places more than you do.

What if the Lord makes it clear that He has chosen someone else instead of you? The Bible is filled with examples of people with examples of people faced with this very situation: God chose Abel's offering instead of Cain's, Isaac instead of Ishmael, Jacob instead of Esau, and Joseph instead of his brothers.

Nothing is a greater test of our character. Either we will rise up in jealousy and jeopardize our own calling, or we will rejoice with our brother or sister over God's choice and blessing.

Jonathan is a good example of someone who had the right response to God's choice of someone else. Although it would have been easy to feel threatened by the prophecy that David would be the next king instead of him, Jonathan instead committed himself to doing everything he could to make David successful. He rejoiced in telling his friend David, "*You will be king over Israel and I will be next to you*". (I Samuel 23:17).

Those who humble themselves under God's almighty hand will be exalted in due time (see I Peter 5:6). He has a wonderful role for you to fill in His body, a role fashioned especially for you. As you seek Him, He will show you what it is.