

Talents and Worship

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One of the most deceptive ideas to corrupt worship among many religious groups involves God-given talents. It goes something like this: *“Since I have a God-given ability to play musical instruments, I will use that talent to His glory in worship.”* Thus worship services in many churches have turned into talent shows where each performs his or her God-given talent for the audience.

It is true that God is responsible for the differing talents and abilities of each individual. Some are endowed with physical excellence (strength, swiftness, coordination); others are mentally blessed (math skills, logical thought, enhanced memory); and yet others are enriched with beneficial character traits (patience, empathy, optimism). (cf. Rom 12:6-8).

It is also true that we are to develop and use every talent at our disposal to glorify God and edify others. But when it comes to the gathering of the church for worship, the Bible is very clear about those activities and the manner in which they are to be carried out.

The church assembles for joint participation in the Lord’s supper (1 Cor 11:18, 20, 33-34). This is an activity that enriches the soul and is prescribed by God. Now perhaps some sister who has a knack for good cooking may be appointed to bake the bread for communion and she would be using a God-given talent in a lawful way. But this is a wholly different matter from the same sister using her culinary skills to fill the meeting house with cakes, cookies, crepes and coffee so that everyone can snack during the preaching.

Congregation also engage in the joint edification of hymn-singing, and any brother or sister who is musically endowed may exercise that talent joyfully and enthusiastically as the congregation mutually edifies itself in song (Eph 5:19). But this is a horse of a different color from the same brother or sister crooning a Country & Western tune and calling it “worship”.

For worship to be acceptable it must be offered within the bounds of what God has authorized. Leaving that domain and offering whatever one chooses amounts to presumption and disobedience. Nadab and Abihu stand as an eternal warning to those who would take selfish liberty with what is offered as worship to Almighty God (Lev 10:1-3).

It is commendable to want to use our talents for God’s glory. But talent is not license. If God gave the talent, God also has the right to stipulate how those talents should be used to glorify Him.