



## IS ANYTHING REALLY WRONG WITH CHOIRS AND SOLOS?

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Choirs and solos have plagued the religious world since their beginning by man, in the fifth century, hundreds of years after Christ established His church. So why have people, for many years now, been interested in using them to worship God? Is anything really wrong with choirs and solos?

### What is worship?

Worship has always been part of the Law of God. From the very beginning of time, God has required His followers to worship Him. What is worship? The Webster's Dictionary gives the following ideas for worship: "reverence offered a divine being; respect or adoration for or devotion to an object; to honor a supernatural power; to take part in an act of worship." So the world defines worship as reverence, respect, admiration, devotion, or honor to a being or object. In our case the Being is God our Creator!

The Bible is our guide in all truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Let's see what it says about what worship is. In the Bible, when the word "worship" is used, it refers to showing reverence to God, or to adoring God. It also has the idea of bowing before God. In John 4:24, Jesus said, "***God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***" Here we have outlined acceptable worship by a child of God. Our worship is pleasing to God when it is done in spirit and truth. "***In spirit,***" refers to the right attitude and frame of mind. "***In truth,***" refers to being done truly, according to God's Will, or doing the right acts as God instructed (John 17:17).

There are many examples of worship in the Bible. Many talk of God's followers going to worship or assembling to worship. For example, Abraham took his son, Isaac, to a place to worship God. In Genesis 22:5, we read that Abraham left his servants with the animals and went over yonder to worship God. The Israelites also assembled often in the presence of God to worship Him.

We also have many examples from the book of Psalms and other books of the Old Testament where individuals worshiped God in song, prayer, and other individual acts. Many people approached God alone and honored Him in worship.

There is definitely a distinction in the Bible, which must be acknowledged, between formal worship and informal worship to God. Formal worship is that collective gathering together of the people of God, or of an individual, to perform commanded acts of worship to God. Informal worship is other types of reverence or devotion, showed to God, apart from formally called or organized worship.

To say that one is not worship, or is less important than the other, is doing dishonor to God. All of these offerings by God's people were regarded as sweet smelling savors, when done according to His Will.

### **What is singing?**

Also important to our discussion is the understanding of singing. Choirs and solos fall under this form of worship. Has God commanded singing? If so, what kind of singing?

When the early church met together for worship they sang praises to God. In Ephesians 5:19 we read, "*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" Paul also told the Colossian brethren, "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (Colossians 3:16). In both of these passages the command is to sing. **This singing was done collectively by the entire church, all at the same time.** How do we know this? First, these verses confirm this fact. They both use a reflexive pronoun in the Greek, which is to one another. This indicates action being done at the same time by two or more individuals. The idea is you do it to me and I do it to you, at the same time.

History also confirms that the early church participated only in congregational singing. Why? Because this was the pattern or example left by the apostles.

What is the purpose of singing? First, singing is done to praise and glorify God. Secondly, we again refer to Paul's words in Colossians 3:16. "*teaching and admonishing.*" Singing is used to teach God's message, and to encourage us, as we are obeying His will. Therefore, in singing, we praise God, teach others, and we are encouraged as we participate.

### **How do people justify choirs and solos?**

As we can see from history, choirs and solos outside the formal worship service to God, as many perversions have. However, as their popularity grew, they eventually took the place of God's pattern for congregational singing. This is why we must address this issue from the standpoint of what is wrong with religious choirs and solos. How do people justify such in today's religious world?

**ARGUMENT 1 - "WE ARE NOT IN WORSHIP!"** The first argument we always hear in favor of choirs and solos is, "We are not in worship!" Is one to believe the following: Christians can collectively sing a song to praise God in a formal worship service, and then close the service a prayer, thus declaring they are no longer worshipping? After closing the service, they can then sing same song and say it is not worship because they had already closed out the formal worship service. Can we turn God to "on or off?" Is there some way to determine whether they are worship or not? Yes, there may be some difference in the level or degree of worship in which one engages, but when we sing praises to God, are we not worshipping Him? Are we to believe that worship only takes place in our collective formal worship services? The Bible does not support the idea that worship only takes place in formal assemblies! In fact, we see that people worship at different times in different places, sometimes individually and sometimes collectively.

What about prayer? We would all say that we are worshipping God when we pray to Him in a formal worship service. But, if we close our service, and have another prayer, then are we no longer giving any type of worship (honor, respect, reverence) to God? For our sakes, and to be acceptable to God, we must mean and understand what we are doing!

The fact is, when we engage in an act of worship to God whether in formal worship or informal worship, it should be done in spirit and truth, if it is to be acceptable. Because when we purposefully focus on God and give Him homage, we enter into a form of worship to Him.

**ARGUMENT 2 - "WE REALLY ENJOY IT!"** Another argument which is given in favor of choirs and solos is: "We really enjoy it;" "It encourages me;" "It's fun." First, let's remember that just because something is enjoyable does not make it acceptable! All sin is enjoyable, but it is not acceptable to God. In Leviticus 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to God in their worship to Him. He rejected it and destroyed them! The other problem with this argument is that the emphasis is put on our personal enjoyment. The real purpose at hand is to praise God and teach others. Yes, we are to be encouraged, but are we engaging in worship for our own pleasure? There is a big difference. Encouragement is the result of doing what is right and good. If we are doing it only because we receive pleasure from it, then we are missing the purpose. God is the only spectator in worship! We are all participants. We glorify Him in song collectively to accomplish His Will. If we are not participating, we are not worshipping! No one can worship on our behalf! We must give our own offering to God!

**ARGUMENT 3 - "IT IS NOT FOR ENTERTAINMENT, BUT EDIFICATION!"** Over and over we have heard brethren claim that choirs and solos have nothing to do with entertainment. If this is the case, why is it necessary for one group to stand before another? Are the ones in the choir just stretching their legs, or are they wanting to stand in front to be seen? Why is it that we clap after the song is sung? Is this to glorify and praise God, or to congratulate the choir or soloist for the excellent job they did? Who is to receive the praise? Who is to be glorified? It is one thing to tell someone he did a good job and quite another to give him the praise, glory and honor instead of God.

Would the same people who want choirs and solos be satisfied to just sit in their seats, without standing before another group? Would they be satisfied if everyone joined with them in the song, so that they were no longer heard exclusively? What purpose do these choirs and solos serve? They only add to the perfect pattern which God gave for our singing of praise!

What a disturbing thing it is to see how young people today, all over the world, are always the ones involved in wanting such activities! How often do you see older adult Christians pushing to have choirs or solos of their own, which they will perform in? Why are we trying to be like the denominational world? Are we God's people? Are we satisfied with the pattern which He has given us? We must learn to be content with what we have been commanded to do for God. Let's not fall into the snares of the wicked nations among us.

### **Final Illustration**

Here is one more example for us to think about! If the men of the church were meeting and I called my wife before them to lead us in a solo, would it be proper for her to do so? What if I, as a man, joined her in the solo and we sang to the men of the church? Would either of these be accepted in the true church of our Lord today? What would be wrong with it if we are not in worship? If she can sing before us, why can't she pray? Again, we are not in a formal worship. If she can sing and pray before us outside of worship, why can't she teach and preach to us? There is more to this problem than an innocent song being sung by an individual or a group. We must wake up and see that we are headed in the same direction that so many denominations have already gone! **They were deceived and we are being deceived also!**

The fact is, God has given us a pattern. He has set order to things in His church. When we worship Him, or come before Him, it must be done according to that pattern. Let's not be caught up in the things of this world, but let us be satisfied with the simple pattern which Christ has given us!