

# Spiritual Considerations...



*Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.*

Dave Phillips, editor

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## Worth Reading and Thinking About

Dave Phillips

There are numerous people with whom we associate everyday who are doubtlessly searching for a relationship with God or working on improving their relationship with God. I do not doubt the sincerity of their search or their hearts. What is tragic is the lack of a clearly defined and well-advertised road to truth. You may say, "Wait a minute, we have the Bible." I agree. I also agree that it is well-defined. I don't believe the ways in which people have been taught to look at the Bible are the same.

How do we view the Bible? Some see it as a rule of general principles, designed to show "God's ideal plan," but realizing that we could never reach the goal. The way I've heard it explained to me recently is that the Bible is similar to speed limit signs on the highway – intended to show the general plan for the highway, but never genuinely expecting anyone to keep the speed limit. (I told this person that I would love to be at the trial when he articulates this plea before a judge). Others see the Bible as the revealed word of God, but always to be interpreted by the church. Before we label any particular group as having that specific view (which many do), we should also ask ourselves how many times we have heard someone say, "Our congregation doesn't view the Bible that way – we don't press that point." Other still think the Bible is the revealed will of God and has application to every person who is alive.

The following excerpts show a variety of perspectives regarding the Bible, worship and our country. As you read them, think of passages that apply to this specific situation. Other excerpts will allow comparing and contrasting popular ideas.

### "How Sweet The Sound"

*"The Search for the Best Church Choirs in Memphis"*

*Sponsored by Verizon Wireless and WHAL-FM*

"...We are inviting all houses of worship in the Memphis area to participate in a search that will reward the most passionate, dedicated and talented choirs with cash prizes and perhaps a bit of fame.

Whether it's through music, video or conversation, Verizon Wireless recognizes the importance of communication and connection. The ability to communicate well is integral to building better communities. When we connect with each other we treat each other more respectfully and more responsibly. Part of the mission of Verizon Wireless is to build better, stronger communities. When we can create programs such as How Sweet the Sound that enhance and help fulfill this mission, we are being true to our core values as a company."

*Dave* - Interesting, isn't it? What is the purpose of singing? To compete? To receive cash awards? To receive personal honor or fame? The accompanying DVD sent to advertise the program contained choral directors motivating their respective singing groups by proclaiming how much better they were. So much for unity.

### Undenomination Christianity

J.N. Armstrong, 1913

"The world today practically knows nothing of undenominational Christianity. For many, the idea that a person can be only a Christian is hard to accept. As soon as one affirms that he is a Christian, the invariable question is "To what denomination do you belong?" The idea that a person can be a Christian and not belong to some denomination is even denied. Should one dare to claim he is a Christian and deny any denominational affiliation, a denominational name will be thrust upon him."

The Holy Spirit, throughout His teaching and in strong terms, forbids all additions, subtractions, amendments, and alteration to His teaching. We know this as certainly as we know that we must die. Denominationalism, with all of its complications and contrivances, is an addition made by human "wisdom" to the simplicity of Christ. That fact is as sure as the fact that Jesus arose from the grave. The Holy Spirit

stoutly forbids additions to His work. Through Christ He has give undenominational Christianity only. It is inexplicable, then, how devoted hearts – hearts determined to follow the Spirit of God in religion – can continue in denomination Christianity. What will you do about it? It is your responsibility.”

*Dave* – Two extremes are prevalent in our world. We may think denominationalism is a rather recent practice. Others perhaps think that denominations have always existed. I like what Jim Bill McInTeer said when he spoke at Germantown, “I want to restore *pre*-denominational Christianity.” Thankfully, the source for pre-denominational Christianity is found in the Bible.

### **Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement**

Dan Lucarini, 2002

“...I need to confess another motive that drove me to lead contemporary praise and worship. Suddenly, here were all these churches trying to play rock music in their services but performing it so badly! Didn't they realize the unchurched would laugh at their weak attempts and stop coming? I thought that if they were going to use rock, they should ensure it was of the highest quality. I knew exactly how to fix that. Because of my rock and roll background and experiences, I was an expert on how the music should be played. And because of my additional experience as a hymn song-leader, I even thought God was ‘calling me’ to be the bridge between traditional and contemporary church music.”

“Now I want to summarize the reasons I had to leave the CCM scene. Firstly, I could no longer accept the premises under girding the CCM philosophy. In other words, the piles holding up the pier turned out to be rotten and crumbling. Our key premises were that music is amoral; God accepts all music styles; and no one should judge another's preference or tastes. As I dug into the bible to prove them right, instead I saw that they were man-centered, illogical and misrepresentations of basic biblical principles...”

“I saw that we were in danger of becoming the same hypocrites we accused the Traditional of being. For example, on eo four main charges against conservative church music and services was that they lacked spontaneity; they were boring and predictable. But somehow we did not notice that our own CCM services had become numbingly the same, week after week...”

“The Traditionals had some guidelines to restrain them, but Contemporaries have no rules, so when things become too familiar they bring in louder, jazzier and more questionable material. That is one of the curses upon CCM: the music will continually be on this slippery slope and worship leaders will be forced to accept any musical style, no matter how disgraceful. I had to get away from that.”

“I suppose the happy ending to my story would be to say that I am once again busily involved in the music ministry at this church. But I am not.”

*Dave* – To my knowledge, this man is not a member of the church of Christ, but the attitudes expressed in his book reveal a sincere struggle as he searches for a better way of worship. Isn't it interesting that some in the Lord's church are modeling themselves after other religious groups – and since we are always ten years behind them, we may be meeting them coming away from their search to the extremities. Seems if we stay with the word, we'll have a common meeting grounds.

### **History of Musical Instruments**

Robert L. Dabney, 1889

“Christ and his apostles ordained the musical worship of the New Dispensation without any sort of musical instrument, enjoining only the singing with the voice of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Hence such instruments are excluded from Christian worship. Such has been the creed of all churches, and in all ages, except of the Popish communion after it had reached the nadir of its corruption at the end of the thirteenth century, and its prelatit imitators.”

*Dave* – Dabney was a Southern Presbyterian. He wrote this in Presbyterian Quarterly in 1889. He made this statement as a part of a review of a book entitled, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church*. A fuller discussion can be found in *Old Light on New Worship*, written by John Price, a Baptist preacher in Rochester, New York. This discussion is not peculiar to our brethren. Religious groups have discussed this for many years. Our challenge now is not to find unity of thought, but clarity of instruction from God.