

# Praise & Worship

## The hard question

In the original Hebrew words, we see that music was a *part* of praise & worship, but never did it imply skillful excellence. (Did you notice that?)

- **The HEART of praise & worship has nothing to do with skill or ability.**

Yet, in our culture, Skill *is* a primary focus of worship teams. So why? Is that biblical?

Yes, The Bible *does* mention skill, especially in regards leading Praise & Worship through music.

### Explicit Passages:

- Psalm 33:3
  - (NLT) Sing a new song of praise to him; **play skillfully** on the harp, and sing with joy.
- 1 Chronicles 15:22
  - (NLT) Kenaniah, the head Levite, was chosen as the choir leader because of **his skill**.
- 1 Chronicles 25:6-7
  - (NLT) All these men were under the direction of their fathers as they made music at the house of the Lord. Their responsibilities included the playing of cymbals, harps, and lyres at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman reported directly to the king. 7 They and their families **were all trained in making music before the Lord**, and each of them—288 in all—was an **accomplished musician**.
- 2 Chronicles 34:12
  - (NLT) The workers served faithfully under the leadership of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the Merarite clan, and Zechariah and Meshullam, Levites of the Kohathite clan. Other Levites, all of whom **were skilled musicians**,
- 1 Samuel 16:16-18
  - (NLT) 16 Let us find a **good musician** to play the harp whenever the tormenting spirit troubles you. He will play soothing music, and **you** will soon be well again.”
  - 17 “All right,” Saul said. “Find me someone who plays well, and bring him here.”
  - 18 One of the servants said to Saul, “One of Jesse’s sons from Bethlehem is a talented harp player. Not only that—he is a brave warrior, a man of war, and has good judgment. He is also a fine-looking young man, and the Lord is with him.”
  - **QUESTION: Was it David’s “skillful music” that drove away the dark spirit?**
    - Did they want a “skillful” musician for God’s ears? Or Saul’s ears?

## Suggestive Passages:

- 2 Chronicles 5:12-14 (unity, precision)
  - (NLT) And the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers—were dressed in fine linen robes and stood at the east side of the altar playing cymbals, lyres, and harps. They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets. 13 The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the Lord with these words:
    - “He is good!
    - His faithful love endures forever!”
    - At that moment a thick cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. 14 The priests could not continue their service because of the cloud, for the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God.
    - **NOTE: This calls out that they were “unified together”, but it does not explicitly mention their “skill”. On the other hand, we know these musicians were skilled based on the above verses.**
- Nehemiah 12:27 (organized musical celebration)
  - (NLT) 27 For the dedication of the new wall of Jerusalem, the Levites throughout the land were asked to come to Jerusalem to assist in the ceremonies. They were to take part in the joyous occasion with their songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres.
    - **NOTE: Again, we know they were skilled, but this passage does not point to that skill.**
- Amos 6:5 (reference to David’s musical innovation—even in critique)
  - (NLT) You sing trivial songs to the sound of the harp
  - and fancy yourselves to be great musicians like David.
  - **Question: Based on what we’ve study about Amos 4 & 5, (The Rejected Worship), what do you think this passage is referring to?**
    - **Is God saying “You think you’re skilled like David but you’re not”?**
      - **OR – is God saying “You’re skilled, but you don’t have the heart of David”?**
    - **Is this passage about requiring “Skill”, or the “Heart” of Worship?**
- Ecclesiastes 9:10 (do things with all your might—applied principle)
  - (NLT) Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave,[a] there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.
  - **NOTE: This doesn’t specifically point to praise or worship, but does imply working toward being skillful in all that we do.**

## SO WHICH IS IT? (“HEART” OR “SKILL”?)

## **BOTH: GOD’S WORD DOES NOT CONTRADICT ITSELF**

But we must balance this based on perspective & Priority.

### **Food for Thought:**

There are **150-250 verses** that explicitly mention music and/or singing as part of praise & worship.

- **~250-400** if we count *implied* music in praise & worship.

If we look for verses related to “Skillful” music in praise & worship, we see **~ 8 – 10 verses**.

This implies that the idea or concept of having skillful leaders is a theme or custom in the bible (i.e. important), but it doesn’t override the other ~400 into only representing skillful music.

It is also worth considering what we *don’t* see in the Bible:

- We see (in Amos) that God rejected worship because their “Heart” was wrong.
- We *don’t* see any examples where God rejected worship because the music sounded bad.

It may also be worth noting that only the Old Testament mentions skill related to music. In the New Testament, we only see specific mention to the “heart”:

- **Ephesians 5:19** (NLT) singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord **in your hearts**.
- **Colossians 3:16** (NLT): Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God **with thankful hearts**.
- **1 Corinthians 14:15** (NLT) : Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit,[e] and I will also pray in words I understand. I will **sing in the spirit**, and I will also sing in words I understand.
- **James 5:13** (NLT): Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you **happy**? You should sing praises.

Perhaps, what we see in the New Testament *confirms* what we read in the Old:

- Heart > Skill
- Truth > Performance
- Participation > Presentation

It stands to reason, we want to offer God our “best”. But we must remember that the “best” needs to be what God says is “best” (Not our own perspective). (remember Amos 5:21-24?)