



When a Good Thing Becomes a Very Bad Thing

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5)

It began all well and good. It was a way to preach the Gospel. It was a way to minister to both the saved and the unsaved. Properly employed, this tool of ministry opened doors to allow us as Christians to go into places which were previously impossible to get into. Once in the door we were able to preach the Word, live the Word, and enjoy the satisfaction of seeing the impact of the Word. I do not know the exact day when things began to change from "good" to "bad", when what ultimately began as a legitimate move of God foundered and ended in such a sad state, but in retrospect I strongly suspect it was when we put a label on our activities. Not content with merely being "evangelists" or preachers of God's Word or just plain "Christians", we aspired to describe ourselves uniquely so as to be set apart and different from the other activities of the church. Yes, I am quite sure it all began to go downhill when we started to call it a "music" ministry.

There is nothing wrong with music in and of itself. But anything, and I do mean **anything**, can be misused, misapplied, and just plain mistaken. In fact, I would offer the axiom that anything intended for good will ultimately be corrupted by man because, by our very nature,

"When a Good Thing Becomes a Very Bad Thing", Page 1 of 6

we are fallen. Music is as good an example as any, but there are plenty of them within the church. And it seems to me that one of the ways you can tell that something is being overemphasized or taken towards an unbiblical extreme is when it is assigned a name which sounds spiritually warm and fuzzy but, in reality, is not biblically supported. My Bible software is unable to produce any results when searching for “music ministry” in Scripture.

People will tell me, “There are ‘music ministries’ in the Bible – look at David.” Yes, if you mean organizing praise and service in the course of operating the Temple, I get that. But what has that got to do with a 7-piece rock band playing their Christian arrangements for the unsaved? Or even the same playing exclusively for Christian audiences at \$25 a pop? Or making a music video for “Christian TV”? I can tell you from experience that often when such endeavors first take root it is out of the desire to preach the Gospel and to share Jesus. Biblically it is really “evangelism” and music is just the tool, not the “ministry”. But do you know what happens when you start calling it a “music” ministry? The emphasis shifts from the Gospel and eventually the focus is solely fixed on **music**. You become more concerned about the appeal of the music than the quality of the lyrics. You become painfully aware of how you compare with other “music” ministries. In fact, you eventually strive to mirror worldly music groups so that you will appear to be as good and appealing as **they** are because, after all, they are the gold standard.

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Romans 8:5

Jacob has a really great sermon which touches on this topic titled, “[Christ the Foundation](#)” which firmly explains in detail the issue at work here. Basically it occurs whenever someone takes **A** truth and elevates it to become **THE** truth over and above everything else. It may be **A** truth in its right and proper setting, but in the end it

“When a Good Thing Becomes a Very Bad Thing”, Page 2 of 6

becomes a lie because it is given the wrong, heightened priority. Yes, a truth can be over-realized to the point that it actually becomes a *lie*. In this case, the music began as a tool of evangelism and in compliance with the Word. But when the music itself became the focus, it took the center stage away from the Word. The Gospel began to become a secondary consideration to the music. What may have begun in the Spirit ended as a work of the flesh.

Yes, I know that not everyone calling their self a “music ministry” has followed this exact, same tragic path, but I have sure witnessed a lot of them. If you want to know to what degree a group of Christians equipped with musical instruments is committed to the music more than their Bible, assign values to how much time is spent rehearsing versus prayer, fellowship, and Bible study. Consider how much effort is spent on the “business” activities of a music group versus those of an actual church ministry. Weigh the time spent focusing on honing a public image versus being conformed to the image of the One they began their journey to represent. Consider how much of their conversation is consumed with how they compare themselves to other musicians or musical activities, Christian or otherwise.

Now this is not intended as a cautionary tale that all music endeavors are ultimately corrupted and therefore evil. I began with this example because it is most familiar to me personally and has a high likelihood that others will relate to it because they have seen the same thing happen all too often. My point is not to throw all the worship teams under the bus, so to speak, but to provide a basis for understanding a greater trend within the church which I believe is even more alarming. It seems to me that a number of “ministries” have arisen only very recently in church history. The age of specialization within our current culture seems to have spawned a corresponding culture of specialization within the church at large. I do not believe that even as recent as 40 years ago you would find someone who introduced themselves as part of a “music” ministry. And likewise I do not think you could find anyone introducing themselves as part of a

[“When a Good Thing Becomes a Very Bad Thing”, Page 3 of 6](#)

“discernment” ministry. And yet today I am not sure we can even count the number of persons and organizations labeling their self as a “discernment ministry”.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

Again, just as I am not saying music is bad nor that discernment is bad, I am not saying anyone claiming to have a ministry as such is automatically to be dismissed. But I **AM** saying that everything has to pass the test of God’s Word and that does not mean because someone attaches the word “ministry” to their activity that they are automatically qualified as true and biblical.

One of the reasons I am writing about this is because for the past few years an increasing part of my time and attention has been robbed (yes, I deliberately chose the term “robbed”) by so-called discernment ministries in particular. And the chief issue so many of them seem preoccupied with is how they compare to **OTHER** discernment ministries. Some of them spend so much time arguing with, attacking, and otherwise engaging fellow discernment ministries that I question not just their value but their motives. Just as musicians can get sucked into a downward spiral where they judge everything and everyone according to the quality of their own music production values, so it seems there are more than a few discernment ministries whose focus seems to solely rest on proving that they and they alone are the only ones with wisdom and discernment. They often spend more time on their own standing than the actual issue at odds with the Word of God.

They may have started out with the right intention of sounding the alarm where the Word of God applies to situations, events, or even personalities, but as their activities have moved from the Spirit to the flesh they seem to be preoccupied with their own reputation and standing. They seem to be more concerned that they are revered as being the top wizard of their craft. In other words, no longer obsessed

“When a Good Thing Becomes a Very Bad Thing”, Page 4 of 6

with the noble spiritual task of how things align with the Word of God they have become mired in the fleshly pursuit of making *their* name more respected and listened to than anyone else.

Can we agree that no matter what the contribution to the kingdom and body of Christ, that it first and foremost must be rooted in the Great Commission (Mt. 28: 16-18) and Christ's instructions in Acts 1: 6-8? I am beginning to think that in the modern age of specialization that the notion that we are only responsible for our own little compartments is yet another deception for excusing us from preaching and living the Gospel as we have been commanded. "My ministry is music" does not exempt you from sharing the Gospel or any of the basic requirements of following Christ. Having one gift does not exempt you from participating in all the activities of the rest of the gifts. You may be extraordinarily gifted as a teacher, but that does not exempt you from normal giving, sharing the Gospel, or any of the other activities associated with the other gifts.

What is probably the saddest effect of all of this is that there truly *are* some people who are exceptional and biblical in their use of things like music and discernment and such, but they are increasingly lost in a sea of dubious if not outright false efforts. This is another axiom it seems: the biblical are most often far outnumbered by the unbiblical. Satan loves to bury the one, true prophet of God by producing a thousand false ones. Today the one, true person of discernment is being drowned out by a thousand nominal if not false ones.

The irony at the end of this situation is we actually need discernment to determine who is legitimately discerning! Not all those prophesying in God's name today are false prophets, but we are living in a time like Jeremiah's where the true are few and the false are overwhelmingly plentiful. Not all those employing music in the church are seeking to merely advance their own careers, but we are living in a time when they are no longer the normal majority. Not all those engaging in discernment activities are doing so only for their self, but we are living

["When a Good Thing Becomes a Very Bad Thing", Page 5 of 6](#)

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in a time when it is hard to find the occasional true and obedient watchman among the myriad false ones who have recently risen to drown them out.

I think it is important to reiterate something Jacob has stated many times, that although many people call Moriel a “discernment” ministry, that is absolutely **not** the activity that defines us. We engage in areas attributed to spiritual discernment because it is the Christ-given duty of every shepherd to warn and educate the flock. It is something in the basic job description of **every** pastor, teacher, and evangelist. Moriel speaks up whenever necessary, but the day-to-day activities of its missions, orphanages, and outreach activities consume us most. We would be truly happy if we could ignore these discernment dust-ups and concentrate on the larger things. But when the flock is threatened we do not call in a pest control specialist to shoot the wolf – we are commanded to deal with it our self. That does not make us a discernment “ministry”, it merely means that as the need arises we are discerning.

The moral of the story is this: Do not allow even “good” things to get in the way of carrying out the basic requirements of the Kingdom.

In His Love,

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