

THE HOT SEAT

Instrumental Music

Instructions For The Teacher (There is no student handout for this session.)

Place a chair in the middle of the group. If you can paint the chair red, that would be even better. Then, read the case study below to the entire group. Read all the way down to the bold question (Can you answer their arguments). At this point, have one person sit in the chair. Pose one of the arguments that Brandy's friends use to defend instrumental music. Have the student in the chair explain how they would respond. Be sure they cite scripture to back up their answer. After the person in the chair gives their answer, talk it over with the entire group. Add any additional scriptures or thoughts that would strengthen the answer. When you have finished with the first argument, put someone new in the chair and move on to the second. Continue this process until you have covered all the arguments.

Case Study: *Brandy Johnson*

Brandy, Tyler and Kelsey were best friends. They had gone to school together since the 4th grade. They were always together. They had a lot of the same classes at school. They ate lunch together. They went to football games on Friday night. They would always hang out at each other's houses on the weekend. They were inseparable.

They were inseparable every day – except on Sundays. Tyler and Kelsey went to a different church, the Lake Hills Community Church. It was the largest church in town with more than 2000 members. The three friends talk a lot about spiritual things. In fact, sometimes they argued. They just never seemed to agree on what the Bible said on a whole bunch of different issues (instrumental music, what kind of work churches should do, baptism, etc.).

One Friday night the Lake Hills Church was having a big youth event. Tyler and Kelsey really pushed Brandy to come with them. Brandy had never visited before and she was a little curious about what a service would be like in a church with 2000 people, so she agreed to go. The service was like no worship service she had ever attended. It was really more like a rock concert. At the front of a large auditorium, there was stage bathed in pink and blue lights. For most of the evening a band performed "Christian" music while the audience cheered and sang along. At the end, one man made a few remarks about serving Jesus and keeping yourself pure. He held a Bible while he spoke, but never opened it.

After it was all over, the group went back to Kelsey's house to hang out for a while. They crashed on the couch, ate some pizza and began talking about the event that evening. Tyler wanted to know what Brandy thought.

"It was really different," Brandy said tentatively, trying not to offend her friends. "It wasn't like any worship service I've ever attended."

"Yeah," Tyler said enthusiastically. "That's what I love about our church. They really know how to make worship something the kids can relate to."

"Of course," Brandy continued, "I still am not comfortable with the instrumental music thing. As I've told you guys before, I just don't find anything in the Bible about worshipping God with instrumental music."

Kelsey and Tyler had heard this from Brandy before. It really bothered them. They felt like she was running down their church. Both of them became defensive and began to challenge what she said.

Can you answer their arguments?

Argument (1)

Tyler: "That's just not true. David worshipped God with instruments in the Old Testament and God loved it. Why would it be any different today?"

Note To Teachers: Point out to your students that David used instruments in the Old Testament because this is what God said to do (II Chronicles 29:25).

While there is much we can learn from the Old Testament, it is not our covenant with God today (Hebrews 8; Galatians 3:23-25). We do not determine how we should worship God by looking to the laws of the Old Testament. You might point out that it is interesting that people want to borrow instrumental music from Old Testament worship, but not animal sacrifices. I wonder why...

Argument (2)

Kelsey: "We do see Christians worshipping with instruments in the New Testament (Revelation 15:2-4)."

Note To Teachers: Make clear to your students that Revelation 15 envisions things that happen in Heaven, not disciples worshipping on the earth. Also, this is a highly figurative context. The harps are clearly not intended to be literal.

Argument (3)

Tyler: "I think there is a word in one of those passages in the New Testament that means to sing AND play an instrument (Ephesians 5:19). That's what it means in the original Greek language."

Note To Teachers: I would not get caught up in the details of the Greek here. Most students will just be confused. Simply point out that no translator includes the idea of instrumental music. Point this out by having all your students read this verse from their different translations.

Argument (4)

Kelsey: "The Bible never says it's wrong to use instrumental music. You're making a law that God did not make."

Note To Teachers: Point out that God has always told His people how to worship Him. He has done this from the very beginning (Genesis 4:1-5; Exodus 20:4). He expected people to follow His rules exactly and not go out on their own and do their own thing (Exodus 32:1-10; Leviticus 10:1-3). We do not use instruments because we respect God and try to do exactly what He said to do.

Argument (5)

Tyler: "Some people have a gift for playing instruments. When they play in worship, they are simply using their gifts to honor God. When you don't let them play, you are not allowing them to use their gifts and honor God."

Note To Teachers: Point out how silly this argument is. Someone may have a gift for cooking steaks, so should we bring in a grill and make BBQ part of our worship service?

Argument (6)

Kelsey: "The music we heard at the concert tonight was great. I enjoyed it. It made me feel close to God. God wants us to enjoy worship. How can this be wrong?"

Note To Teachers: This would be a great time to point out that worship is first and foremost about God, our expressions of praise and gratitude TO GOD for the great things He's done for me (Ephesians 5:19). It's not about me, it's about pleasing God.

You might also point out that many aspects of Old Testament worship would not have been pleasing or enjoyable to the worshiper (animal sacrifice). But they did it because this is what God required.

Argument (7)

Tyler: "I just think you're making a big deal out of nothing. I really don't think God cares whether we sing with just our voices or worship Him with a praise band. The important thing is that He is being worshipped."

Note To Teachers: When our kids encounter this statement, they need to ask this question: "How do you know God does not care?" Everything we read in the Bible suggests that God certainly cares (Leviticus 10:1-3).