

# Checking Under the Hood

By Tony Guerrero

**T**his might rock your world. You know those Sunday morning services you pull off every week? The planning, the preparation, the rehearsals, the communication, the organizing, all to get ready for that moment when you stand before your congregation leading or playing music as they join their voices? Did you know that, sometimes, God hates it?

“But I am making a sacrifice of praise to my God! I am leading His people, fulfilling His purpose for me, being who He made me to be and expressing my utter joy!”

It may be time for some self-evaluation.

The fact is we often fulfill our roles as worship leaders and musicians without the slightest regard for where we actually are in our relationship with God. And while we often can easily fool our congregations, even ourselves, we simply cannot fool God.

## Amos 5:21-24 reads:

*“I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring Me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.”*

Taken out of context, this sounds like an admonition towards non-believers. But actually, God is speaking to us—believers whose worship is not genuine and is accompanied by our self-motivated and self-serving attitudes.

## Misplaced Trust

God compares it to the Israelites during their 40 years in the desert. He points out in verse 25 that, even though He miraculously freed them from their slavery, they refused to trust Him and, in fact, treated Him with contempt (Num 14:11). Since the people trusted in themselves and their idols, their worship of God was superficial and meaningless.

The point is that sacrificing to God—attending church, leading worship, serving, giving your offering, asking for forgiveness—means nothing to God if you do not really trust Him and you treat Him with contempt.

“But I love and serve God, I don’t treat Him with contempt!”

Sure, we all love God, but I’m pretty sure most of us, when we truly examine our lives, will find that there is plenty of contempt there. Are you really trusting God? With your finances? Your job? Your marital status? Are you working behind the scenes to position yourself instead of allowing God to position



you? Do you ever gossip? Even just a little? Are you ever unreliable? Habitually late? Do you ever dress for worship with an eye towards getting noticed? Are you lobbying for solos? Playing too loud all the time?

More to the point, Matthew 5 teaches us plainly that if we have offended a brother, we are not to even bother giving our offering until we have sought to heal the situation. And yet how many times have you stood in front of your congregation singing or playing while a conflicted relationship in your life remained unresolved?

Any time we act in pride, selfishness, or as if we relied on our own strength and abilities over God’s, we are treating Him with contempt. And music ministry is ripe with opportunities to act these sins out.

## This Moment

The passage in Amos ends with, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” True justice and righteousness depend on the knowing and acting as if there is a moral lawgiver over you and to whom you are obedient. If every decision rides on what benefits you the most at the moment, justice and righteousness will be sadly lacking.

Many Christians freely make comments like, “Come quickly, Lord!” and “Jesus, take me now!” Sometimes I wonder how ready any of us really are. For those who aren’t really ready, Amos 5:18 questions and cautions: “Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light.” Still want Him to come this moment?

## Always Love

We need to examine our relationship with God before we can confidently approach Him. And there is great news when we do, because God wants to forgive us when we ask, and while He may sometimes hate the things we do, He always loves us.

Our boldness should never come because of our own strength, but because of the amazing gift God has for us. In a counterbalance to Amos 5:18, Hebrews 4:16 tells us to “approach the throne of grace with confidence” because it is there, not by our own strength and abilities, that we “might receive mercy and find grace.”

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