

Our Philosophy

God created music for the sole purpose of bringing Him glory (cf. Rom. 11:36). It predates creation (Job 38:7) and will always exist as a channel for the worship of God (Rev. 5:9; 15:3).

Music is only a part of our worship to God, but it is an important part, so it is crucial, therefore, that we understand its proper role and its biblical use. Scripture speaks very directly to several issues about musical worship. It often records God's approval of a variety of musical instruments in worship (e.g., 1 Chron. 25:6; Ps. 150). Choirs and vocalists, separate from the congregation, were a prescribed part of Israel's worship (1 Chron. 15:16-28; 2 Chron. 5:13ff; Neh. 7:1; 12:27-47). God appointed men to lead the musical element of the corporate worship (1 Chron. 15:27; Neh. 12:42, 46; fifty-five of the Psalms begin with "for the choir director"). Biblical music could be either loud and exuberant (Ps. 95:1; 98:4; 150:5) or quiet and contemplative (2 Chron. 35:25).

The New Testament reveals that the music ministry of the church serves as an extension of the ministry of the Word (Col 3:16). Through the truth that is sung believers "teach and admonish one another." Therefore, it is imperative that the music of the church be theologically rich and corporately edifying.

Furthermore, Scripture identifies the types or kinds of music that are acceptable in the worship of God. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 list "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Psalms refers to the Old Testament Psalter and those later songs that arise directly out of its poetry. Hymns are those songs that set forth the truth about God. The expression spiritual songs refers to music that is neither psalms nor hymns, but has a biblically-solid, spiritual message. What is clear from Paul's comment, as well as the rest of Scripture, is that we must balance our worship between the subjective expression of our thoughts to God (Ps. 18:1-2) and the objective revelation of God to us (Ex. 15:1; Deut. 31:22, 30; 32:44; Rev. 15:3; cf. 1 Cor. 14:15).

The absence of any reference in Scripture and the testimony of church history demonstrate that there is no biblical restriction on any particular sound or progression of notes. Nevertheless, today's church often finds the issue of music especially divisive. There has been an increasing clash between those who embrace contemporary music and those who enjoy more traditional music. Churches have chosen one of three basic responses to this conflict. Some have decided to use only one style of music--either entirely contemporary or entirely traditional. Others have attempted to resolve the conflict by providing separate services: an all-contemporary service and an all-traditional service. Both of those solutions only further divide and segment the church rather than produce mutual understanding and unity. At Parker Bible Church, we have chosen to take the third solution: to plan for a mix of the best of traditional and contemporary music. This has been the historic position of our church.

Regardless of the style of music, the actual presentation of the vocalists and musicians is very important. Musicians that are unprepared or music that is done poorly can distract from worship. Thus the biblical imperative to 'play skillfully' implies acquired abilities and training, as well as rehearsal (1 Chron. 15:22; 25:7; Ps. 33:3). Pretentious performances calculated to excite men's praise can also distract from the ultimate purpose of all music: bringing glory to God. In his preaching Paul chose not to speak with "cleverness of speech" (1 Cor. 1:17b), which he had acquired through his training in classical rhetoric. In the same way, musicians involved in leading worship have a unique responsibility to reject the performance mindset often acquired in their training. The goal of the musicians involved in worship must always be the natural, undistracting excellence that draws the listeners' attention to the Lord and His truth.

Martin Luther, who revolutionized the place of music in the church, said of music:

"The riches of music are so excellent and so precious that words fail me whenever I attempt to discuss and describe them.... In summa, next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.... This precious gift has been given to man alone that he might thereby remind himself that God has created man for the express purpose of praising and extolling God."

The clearest and most profound biblical example of music used in this way in corporate worship is 2 Chronicles 5:11-14:

"When the priests came forth from the holy place and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting," then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God." That is our great goal.