

Chapel Grove Baptist Church's Philosophy on Music :

Introduction

One of the greatest duties and privileges of human beings made in the image of God is the worship of our Creator. The term worship is derived from the old English word worth-ship, which means to ascribe worth or value to something, or to esteem something greatly. This is exactly what God commands of His people in passages such as 1 Chronicles 16:29: "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness".

While it's true that all of creation, including animals and inanimate things worship God in one sense (Ps. 19:1, Ps. 148:1-10), as image bearers, humans are uniquely equipped to worship God consciously and thoughtfully. The tragedy of humanity's fall into sin is that we have taken the worship that is due solely to God and instead given it to created things (Rom. 1:25). Of the many things that Jesus Christ accomplished through His sacrificial death and resurrection, one of God's chief priorities was the restoration of a Spirit-indwelled people who would worship God rightly (John 4:23-24). For redeemed saints, worship is not limited to what we do on Sundays, but includes the entirety of our lives (Rom. 12:1). Yet, God specifically commands His people to gather corporately to worship Him (Ps. 95:6, 96:8), and the worship of God through song is something that God has commanded for His glory and the joy of His people (Ps. 98:1, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16).

Throughout the years and to this day, there have been many debates in the church about the music that God's people employ as they seek to obey the Scriptural commands mentioned above. This has resulted in much confusion concerning what the church should be doing musically as we gather. At Chapel Grove Baptist Church, our aim is to allow God's Word to shape both what we do and how we do it. Below is a brief overview of the chief tenants of CGBC's music ministry philosophy, outlined using the acronym G.R.A.C.E.

Gospel-Saturated

The CGBC music ministry aims to be gospel-saturated. This means that each the songs we sing will either explicitly or implicitly point to the finished work of Christ on the cross and His victorious resurrection as the basis for our ability to approach a holy God in worship (Heb. 9:1-15). Additionally, because the person and work of Christ is the main point of redemptive history and revelation (Luke 24:44-47), we aim for that to be the main point of what we sing.

Regulative-Principled

The CGBC music ministry aims to be regulative-principled. This means that what we do musically must be either directly commanded or clearly implied in Scripture. We are not free to

decide for ourselves what to do when we come before God. Our corporate worship of God must be regulated by God's Word (Ex. 25:40, Lev. 10:1-2,)

Affection-Engaging

The CGBC music ministry aims to be affection-engaging. This means that we aim to not only think appropriately about God, but to respond with appropriate affections for God. (Psalm 28:2, 32:11, 33:1, Ps. 116:1) Joy, gladness, sorrow, love, grief, etc. are all emotional expressions found in the context of worship in the Bible. Like all things, human emotion exists for the glory of God. We want to avoid emotionalism, which makes human feelings ultimate as well as stoicism, which denies human feelings altogether.

Culturally-Specific

The CGBC music ministry aims to be culturally-specific. This means that the music should reflect the particular culture of the congregation while also being mindful of our surrounding context (Ps. 150:3-5, 1 Cor. 14:15-17). We believe that the emphasis in Scripture is heavily weighted toward the content of our music rather than the style of music. Therefore, there will be some diversity in music style as we seek to locate ourselves within the broader context of church history by singing older songs while also seeking to create new songs and fresh expressions that communicate that God is active in the present as well as the past.

Encouraging Expressiveness

The CGBC music ministry aims to encourage expressiveness. This means that our response to God in song should take into account that God gave us bodies to glorify Him with. In the context of the corporate gathering, this should reflect itself in expressions such as robust singing (Ps. 33:3), the lifting of hands (Ps. 63:4) and clapping (Ps. 47:1). At CGBC, we desire to respond to God passionately, which is fitting, considering what God has done for us in the gospel. We refuse to let the rocks cry out in our place! (Luke 19:40)

Conclusion

What we've listed is not meant to be exhaustive, but a brief overview of some of the principles that drive our musical practices at CGBC. May God be glorified as we gather corporately. May what we do and how we feel be governed by God's Word. And may our response to God reflect that we are a people who have been captivated by who He is and captured by what He has done for us in Christ.

Amen.