

Goals and Objectives

Goals and Definitions of the New Testament Church

Any discussion of a philosophy should begin with a clear outline of the goals to be achieved. A Biblical philosophy of music ministry must then begin with a clear outline of what the Bible teaches about the Church's composition and purposes. It should then center on how music is to be used as a means of accomplishing those purposes within the context of its biblical identity. The local church should be defined as an organized body of members (I Corinthians 5:13; Acts 15:22) with a specific commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-15) that is controlled by the purifying teachings of scripture (Acts 8:13-24; Romans 16:17-18; II Thessalonians 3:6-7). This definition includes, but is not limited to, the activities that occur in the church building. The church should be seen as a family with many varied responsibilities outside the confines of the building it uses for fellowship. It is a family that is mutually committed to provoking each member "to love and to good works" as they go about fulfilling the Great Commission.

Perhaps the single clearest passage addressing the pastor's goals regarding the growth of the church family and the fulfillment of its mission is Ephesians 4:11-16. In this passage, the pastor is to be about the business of completing or perfecting (Ephesians 4:12) each saint in the body so that they can actively engage in the ministry of becoming completely like Christ. Christlikeness, spiritual stability, loving unity, and distinctiveness from the world will occur when each member has complete knowledge of Christ. This constitutes the goal of every true New Testament church--knowing Christ and making Him known. The music ministry of the church must then complement these biblical truths. The music of the church should encourage or equip its members to understand Christ in His completeness. It should build unity, reflect an accurate knowledge of the Trinity, encourage biblical perfection (completeness), and build a scriptural stability that is unmixing with the world.

Just as a study of the prayers of the Bible can be instructive about the goals of prayer, a study of the music of the Bible can also be instructive about the goal of music. In every dispensation, the loftiest purpose of music has been the worship and/or praise of God. As God is worshiped, praised, and believers sing their thanks through music, others benefit. They are instructed about God's character and activities and are encouraged to live in light of these revelations. Believers and unbelievers are confronted with the truths of God as they engage with or are exposed to His Word through music.

Objectives of the Church

Having determined that the church's goal is to cultivate Christlikeness in each member, it is important for each church to set specific objectives. The church's objectives and its music program should begin with a commitment to truthful, open, and supportive relationships within the body. Each joint or ministry contact is to supply the whole body with the loving truths of Christ in such a way that edification occurs (Ephesians 4:15-16). This objective has many applications for congregational singing, large groups, and special music, which will be addressed later. There should be a deliberate commitment to asking whether the objective of engendering godly relationships is being considered before any music program is judged a success. Many church music programs are considered successful yet clearly have not accomplished this objective.

The concert hall or marketplace has often been used to measure the church's music program. This

standard is arbitrary and ignores the clear teaching of the Ephesians 4 model of healthy inter-body life. The church's music program should actively support and even demand that its participants strive to build one another through loving truthfulness rather than sit as critics. Excellence, which will be addressed later in this paper, is important, but it must be properly motivated and achieved with relational integrity. We must not be satisfied with simply producing aesthetically pleasing music that lacks relational integrity. No church or church music program is successful unless it strives to promote a spirit of unity and support.

Another objective to emulate in the church's music is a desire for music that builds accurate knowledge of Christ. A church music program can be judged successful or unsuccessful based on whether it clearly and accurately depicts God. The goal of Christlikeness will be accomplished only as each member is brought to an increasingly clear knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13). A successful church music program strives to present Christ clearly in text, style, character, and emphasis. Church musicians should be encouraged to prepare and present truth clearly as they sing or play. As music is presented to the Lord, everyone exposed to their exemplary worship and praise will be taught and admonished clearly and accurately (Colossians 3:16). This is why musical excellence is important. Musical skill among worship leaders is necessary, even essential, for clarity in the message. Excellence goes to credibility.

Governing Principles

Edification

When considering what music or musical activities to promote in the public and private lives of the church family, there must be a commitment to positive edification. In his letter to the carnal church at Corinth, Paul testifies to his desire to fill his life with activities that are aggressively positive and edifying. In the broader context of 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says the old man is characterized by self-indulgence and a lack of control. The new man, by contrast, is seen as washed, set apart, and justified in Christ. Paul then makes what, on the surface, seems to be a rather libertine statement about his standing in Christ. Actually, Paul is simply stating the position of his opponents in Corinth. The Corinthians of his day said, "all things are lawful unto me" (I Corinthians 6:12), but he wanted to live actively pursuing activities that were edifying to those with whom he ministered. This is clearly seen in the life choices he made regarding his ministry (II Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 1:24). Our musical choices should reflect our desire to build up ourselves and others. Every decision made by the leadership in the church, and in the church's music program in particular, must be made with the governing principle of edification of the body as a whole. Interestingly, Paul uses music as an example of the need to aggressively pursue being understood (I Corinthians 14:7-8) and to be positively edifying (I Corinthians 14:15-17, 26). We must move beyond simply being against some style or musical activity and clearly prove that it will be positive and edifying to the congregation and to the Lord.

Separation

The loftiest purpose for music in the Bible is for it to act as a vehicle of worship for the believer. If then our worship music is to be primarily directed to the Lord it is imperative that believers understand His attribute of transcendence especially His transcendent holiness--His separateness from sin. The music of the church should be governed by a biblical understanding of God's separation

from anything sinful. God wants His worshippers to worship Him in "spirit and truth" (John 4:23). This means that the music of the church should be addressed to and done in light of the triune God and His attributes. Whether the bystanders of worship (the congregation) like or dislike the music, each one in the music program should be committed to offering to God what pleases Him primarily. It is the design of God for us to do our worship of Him in public ways. We must be concerned not only with communicating with God in an unmixed way but also with helping the other listeners (the congregation) communicate with God in an unmixed way. As prompters and models of worship, we must wisely use our talents in such a way as to promote God's holiness in the minds of those present. The music program must be guarded from a mixture of the sacred and profane in the ears of God or the minds of the body (Ezekiel 22:26, 44:23).

Lay Ministry

As we have already seen in Ephesians 4, every layman should be involved in the music ministry (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-21, James 5:13). The practical choices in the week to week ministry of the music leadership will involve questions of who will be involved in different aspects of music ministry, how they will be involved, and with what ministries they will be involved.

The goals and objectives stated earlier help answer the question of who will be involved. Our church music program must encourage every believer to worship then at some level and we must commit to providing opportunities for each body member. Involvement is not the only consideration, but if we are committed to a radically biblical music program then it is certainly one of the major considerations. As you examine music in sacred history, believers were involved in music leadership by virtue of the fact that they were born into certain families. There were individuals that were given special leadership responsibilities based on their skill (I Chronicles 15:22) but for the most part skill was developed (I Samuel 10:5-6). The New Testament as well, does not list music as one of the special gifts of the Spirit but rather is to be encouraged and developed in each individual. The primary focus of a biblical church music program is to equip each believer to worship through the tool of music. Once there is a solid commitment to this principle of lay involvement the question of how people will be involved can be addressed.

Effective, meaningful worship and praise by the whole body through music is often an unwanted stepchild. Sadly, much of the time, attention, and encouragement expended by the leadership of the church can be given to those who are modeling worship during the service--the special music." Establishing the importance and preeminence of universal involvement does not mean that modeling is unimportant. It actually heightens it. Modeling through the public worship of individuals and groups must be done with integrity and gravity. A marriage relationship can help illustrate this point. A child receives great benefit if he can grow up in an environment where he observes parents who praise and show love to each other. If, however, a father begins to show praise and love toward his wife simply because of the benefit he believes it has on his children the main purpose of his actions will be lost. The actions may appear to be the same but the end result will be that the wife will sense the subtle change and the praise will soon become a shallow show. Those involved in the song service and the special music program must continually guard against a similar attitude change as they praise and show love to their Groom the Lord Jesus Christ.

In deciding then what music ministries to engage people in, we must consider the goals, attitudes, and giftedness of each body member. Then we must determine to what extent each member should be

involved and in what ways specially gifted members should model worship. Every individual should be involved in worship but some individuals are better models of it. It would seem easy then to choose those who model it best. The truth is, however, that there are many things to consider when making such a decision. As was mentioned earlier it is hard to evaluate who is truly modeling worship and how they were brought to such a worship experience. The question must be more than "who is the most talented?" or "who will provide the most aesthetically pleasing experience?" The leader must ask the larger question of "who best understands and models worship?" Once this question has been wrestled with, the choice of how many of the best worship models should be included in the public service must be asked. The answers to these questions must be entrusted to a person of integrity, under the Pastor's leadership who is conscientiously trying to synthesize these issues. Here at Calvary Baptist this responsibility falls under the direction of the Assistant Pastor. This balance will not be achieved perfectly or consistently but it is a tremendous step toward progress if they are at least known and there is an honest effort toward implementing them.

Creative Excellence

The need for creative excellence has already been alluded to. The need for excellence can be seen in the whole worship environment of the Old Testament Temple and Levitical system. A single incident that would illustrate this desire for costly worship in the Old Testament is the exemplary attitude of David when he refused to sacrifice to God "of that which doth cost me nothing" (II Samuel 24:24). David was motivated toward costly, sacrificial service by the worthiness of the Lord. It is important for each musician to guard against being motivated by other things. A New Testament example of the desire to worship with a proper motivation is the worship of Mary as she broke the Alabaster box of ointment before Christ (Matthew 26:7). Christ's positive response showed His gratitude for this appropriate gift and spirit. A commitment to creative excellence should not be confused with an arbitrary comparison of the outward. To avoid this each individual must be judged on their own merits. An elementary choir can be an example of creative excellence in worship that reflects their experience and talents just as an adult choir can be a fitting example. A newly formed group can model worship as they take the time and talents that the Lord has given them and act responsibly with them. It is equally true that a group or individual can have relatively superior quality yet in reality not be committed to bringing God sincere, creative worship. Decisions on what is quality and what level of quality will be allowed in each public service must be balanced with the principle of edification. Will this particular gathering of the body be edified by this level of quality at this time? The important thing is that there be a genuine desire for creative excellence that is mixed with spiritual integrity. Leaders are then responsible to the Lord and the body to choose wisely.

Program and Methodology Rationale

Programs for Ministry

The actual practices of any local church will go through changes as principles are applied in specific cultural contexts. The goal of Christlikeness and the body's responsibility to encourage itself toward that goal must be accomplished through practical programs. Though each church's programs will differ they must be justifiable in light of their stated goals and objectives.

The importance of conscientious, spiritual, purposeful congregational singing cannot be overstated. The New Testament uses all inclusive terms in its commands for participation. For too long

Evangelicals in general, and Fundamentalists in particular, have been out of focus on the need to prompt the congregation in biblical worship through music. Church members often come as observers of worship and not participants. When developing the church's music program there must be sufficient prayer, preparation, attention, encouragement, and time for congregational worship through music. Each church must embrace the goal of building a unified body that is building itself up in love. Styles, programs, or individuals that are divisive should be avoided until adequate teaching can occur. Music for congregational singing must be accurate and singable.

The content of congregational singing needs to reflect the emphasis of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. Teaching, admonishing, and speaking to one another happens as each person involved is sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord. Each song chosen for the congregation should be sung on purpose, with a clear rationale based on pure motivations. Services can easily become filled with songs that are chosen because they are favorites, will get the ushers down the aisle, or will manipulate the people to do something. We must return to biblically motivated, purposeful congregational singing.

The music an individual or group may present in public worship should be balanced with the other goals of the church music program. The focus of should be the modeling of worship before the congregation and visitors. In light of what has already been said regarding the motivations and attitudes of those who model worship (the special music) it is imperative that all parties involved commit themselves to a clear vision of why they are up in front of people. They are there to model and prompt the congregation to worship along with them as they minister to the Lord. They are presenting their music as mouthpieces of God proclaiming His truth to His people.

Since the focus of this article is a philosophy of church music little has been said about recreation and music. The Bible is not completely silent about what we may define as "secular" music. There are instances of purely instrumental music, (I Samuel 16:23) national or patriotic music, (I Samuel 18:6-7) music about purely "secular" themes, (Numbers 21:17-20) and even music about human love (Song of Solomon). We must do all we do to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31) so we must also consider music done outside the church building. The church is a family of believers and because of that we have the responsibility to encourage each other to choose only that music honors Christ. Suffice it to say that the recreational aspect of music may have a positive place in the life of a Christian and his church but it should be well disciplined and defined.

Programs for Music Ministers

When looking into the objectives of the church body one must be aware of the need to train and equip each believer. In reference to the church we must begin then with training the body as a whole. If we desire for the body to be involved in worship we must then define it, explain it, and demonstrate it to our people. This should be accomplished many ways throughout the life of the church. The most effective way is simply to instruct as opportunities to worship present themselves during each services of the church. Simple reminders about what is happening, to Whom it is that we are speaking, and what He is looking for in worshippers will begin the process of teaching the church the "all things" part of Christ's Great Commission. Worship, in the Isaiah 6 model, does not end until there is a surrender to live in light of the God that has been seen. Every message relates to worship in this sense. The motivation for obedience should be the nature and character of God. Another method then of encouraging the body to use music for its God ordained purpose is simply to preach these

clear commands to the people. Modeling, as has already been developed, is also an important aspect of whole body training.

The importance of modeling illustrates the next area of training--the worship model. Both large groups, such as the choir and orchestra, and small groups or soloists, need to be constantly reminded of their divine duty to sing primarily to the Lord and then as wise models before His people. The next responsibility of the leader is to give these musicians the tools that will aid them in their effectiveness. The coaching times of the large group rehearsals are invaluable for each musician. Participation by each one in the music program in these larger groups will aid in teaching proper philosophy as well as increasing every member's ability to fine tune their musical development. Increasing musical ability can also be enhanced by providing Bible Institute level and seminar training to those involved.

The training of the church musician should start in the home at the earliest age. It is here that the foundation is laid for effective musicianship and for a proper understanding of God through music. The church needs to encourage and promote this by making materials available to the parents through the Sunday School and by other means. One of the reasons for the development of the Christian Day School movement was to aid parents in training their children for the Lord. Music is an indispensable part of the training included in a well rounded Christian School. It is important to develop and include music in the entire Christian Education program of the church. This can be seen for two reasons. First, music is to be a tool for teaching God's Word to the young (Deuteronomy 32) and second, we are to be about training musicians for more effective ministry as they mature in Christ and the church.

Concluding Remarks

Many ministries are grappling with the questions of church music ministry. Paul's words in II Timothy 2 outline a dynamic formula for church music ministry that I pray will be true at Calvary Baptist Church. First, I pray that we would be strong in the grace of Christ--that He would be real in our personal walks. Second, I desire that we be increasingly effective in committing to others what the Lord has taught us about Himself and about what it means to worship Him. Third, that I desire that each one involved in music have clear goals and objectives. Lastly, that we would strive lawfully--fully persuaded that we are following the Holy God that we worship.