

## Our Philosophy of Musical Worship

### The purpose of musical worship:

- *To praise and honor God* - God has ordained music and singing for the purpose of His praise. The Scriptures are full of exhortations to God's people to sing and make music to the Lord. This is a blessing. God was gracious when He gave us the means of music that we might use it as a vehicle to praise Him. As we honor God through song we seek to magnify His glorious attributes (Psalms 21:13; 29:2; 99:3; 117:1-2) and mighty works (Psalm 86:8; 105:2; 111:2), particularly found in the beauty of the cross.
- *To instruct believers in the truth* - Through the songs we sing we have the privilege of instructing, edifying and exhorting one another as we gather together. This element of worship is closely related to the first. As we sing praises together focused on who God is and what He has done through the cross then we are also at the same time instructing one another in these unsearchable truths.

### To fulfill these purposes, our musical worship must be characterized by the following elements:

- *God-centered* (Luke 24:52-53; Acts 2:46-47, 16:25; Revelation 5:9-10, 14:1-5, 15:3) - God is the supreme object of our worship, His glory is our supreme concern in worship, He is the audience to whom our praise is directed.
- *Christ-focused* (John 4:21-23; Colossians 3:16) - Worship itself cannot lead us into God's presence. Only Jesus can bring us into God's presence, and he has done it through a single sacrifice that will never be repeated - only joyfully recounted and trusted in. Christ's work on the cross also assures us that our worship is acceptable to God. Our worship is accepted not on the basis of how good our worship is, but on the basis of what Christ has done.
- *Spirit-empowered* (Ephesians 5:18) - Unfortunately, we have become experts at manufacturing man-made worship experiences. Nice lights, good instrumentalists, fancy trappings, charismatic leader, and we are set. The reality is that all this may make us "feel" close to God or even cause goose bumps to raise on our arms but none of these things empower true God-honoring, Christ-exalting worship. Instead, only the Spirit is able to initiate, enable and prompt authentic God-centered and Christ-focused worship that is pleasing to God.
- *Scripture-driven* (Psalm 19) - Authentic worship is the proper response to a true understanding of the nature and character of God as revealed to us in Scripture. The only way we know God is because He has graciously revealed Himself to us in Scripture. Therefore, as we saturate our hearts and minds with the truth of who God is in Scripture then we are driven to respond with wholehearted impassioned worship of Him.

- *Affectionate* (Psalm 18:1; 34:8) - Magnifying God's greatness begins with the proclamation of objective, biblical truths about God, but it ends with the expression of deep and holy affections toward God. Worship leader Bob Kauflin writes, "A clear picture of the living God should move our hearts. His transcendence causes us to feel awe. His holiness evokes sorrow for our sin. A view of his mercy leads to gratefulness. The knowledge of his sovereignty brings great peace. Meditating on the price the Savior paid to reconcile us to God leaves us lost in wonder, and rightly so. Mind and heart belong together. Strong, passionate desires for God flow from and encourage the faithful, thoughtful study of God - his nature, character, and works."
- *Congregational* (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19) - As the corporate body of Christ we unite together to sing about who God is and what He has done. As God's people gathered together for worship we must not be passive observers. Neither should our worship gatherings breed a performance culture, as if we were attending a concert to be entertained. Instead, with one corporate mouth we are to confess God's marvelous truth together.
- *Sincere* - The priority in worship is the inner purity of the worshipper rather than the form in which worship is expressed (i.e., variety of styles, expressions - new and old). Therefore, our primary concern when we gather together for worship should not be the style of worship, but the state of our hearts. The great hymn-writer Isaac Watts once wrote: "The Great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for God." Our desire is that our worship would not be hypocritical, but instead the words that we sing with our lips would match the reality and/or desire of our hearts.
- *Intelligible* (1 Corinthians 14:13-19, 26-28) - According to 1 Corinthians 14 "intelligibility" is one of the primary components of worship gatherings. If what's being sung is not understood by those present then it will fail in fulfilling one of the key purposes for musical worship, namely the edification of the believer. This truth has major ramifications on the types of songs we sing each Sunday mornings. It's important we use discernment when selecting songs and avoid those with language/words that might be confusing or misunderstood by those present. There is nothing inherently wrong with singing a song that has language that is difficult to understand, however it's important to explain the portion that may be confusing or misunderstood.