



*Eden*

Baptist Church

music  
ministry



# MUSIC PHILOSOPHY

## OF EDEN BAPTIST CHURCH

### **Preface**

It is the foundational purpose of Eden Baptist Church to magnify the splendor of God by the joyful fulfillment of His will on earth (John 17:4). One aspect of God's will for believers is the utilization of music to exalt and praise Him (Psalm 66:2), to express thanks for the new life which He has graciously provided (Ephesians 5:19,20) and to edify one another in the assembly (Colossians 3:16).

Music cannot generate worship. No musician, musical technique, technological tool or worship leader can "get an assembly to worship." Worship cannot be confined to a building, nor does it depend upon a particular "atmosphere" or "feeling."

John 4:24 reveals that true worship hinges upon a proper heart attitude united with theological truth. Quality worship therefore transcends music, technology, atmosphere and assembly. The believer can worship in spirit and truth while enduring torture for Christ or while standing in a long check-out line at the grocery store. Conversely, a believer who is grieving the Holy Spirit is incapable of true worship even when surrounded by ideal ambiance, the highest quality music and the gifted efforts of skilled worship leaders.

While worship cannot be externally manufactured, the creation of a worship opportunity is, however, a noble and vital pursuit of the vibrant church. While no musical leader can create worship in the hearts of people, it is the responsibility of all worship leaders and musicians to lead the assembled body to express its joy in God through praise and thanksgiving and to edify one another in love. As such leadership is provided, the worshipers of Eden Baptist Church should consistently find occasion to express their sincere worship in

spirit and truth as they anticipate, in Christian hope, the aura and dynamic of the scene prophesied in Revelation 5:11-14:

*Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

The following principles are not necessarily exhaustive, but seek to sketch out essential philosophical guidelines in the promotion of God-exalting music in the assembly. Humble adherence to these principles in the selection and ministration of music in the church should steer Eden Baptist in her pursuit of authentic worship that magnifies God's splendor.

### **Principle of Glorification**

The music, lyrics and performance of every song must serve to magnify the splendor of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Chronicles 5:13, 14). Musical expressions employed in the assembly must intentionally promote the glory of the Creator by means of purposeful alignment with His creative design.

Musically, this means that each ministration should audibly reflect the joyful harmony of creation in which beauty, balance, resolution and excellence in here. Musical selections should be avoided which do not readily align themselves with a theistic world-view.

Textually, this means that lyrics must never magnify the glory of man while mitigating the glory of the Creator. Care must be exercised in the selection of lyrics to assure that divine gifts are not elevated over their Giver nor the interests and accomplishments of creatures over those of the Creator. While it is appropriate to rejoice in God's gifts, His creative handiwork, and His blessing upon the works of believers, these must never be magnified in a manner which minimizes God as the singular source of our soul's joy (2 Chronicles 5:13).

Presentationally, this means that the ministry of music must not serve to magnify the performer or the performance. The musician should labor to communicate to the audience in a manner that purposefully steers the focus of attention toward God and His truth.

### **Principle of Distinctiveness**

Music expressed by Spirit-filled believers in the worship of God must be fundamentally distinct from music employed to express the spirit of the age (1 Peter 1:14-16). While there is no virtue in choosing church music simply because it is distinct from the world, there is certainly no inherent virtue in mimicking the musical sounds or lyrics produced by the world.

Since the mid-twentieth century, it has been largely assumed by evangelicals that lyrics alone are capable of rendering a song moral or immoral. The attendant notion that music is itself amoral betrays an embarrassing historical and cultural naiveté and amounts to a cavalier dismissal of the enduring work of musical theorists.

From ancient Greek philosophers to the rock-and-roll legends of the twentieth century, skilled musicians have universally understood that musical composition is a creative act which can powerfully influence the human soul. The auditory influence of music holds as much potential for good or evil as does the visual influence of pictures.

It should be observed that the inherent morality of music is not disproved by the simple fact that godless lyrics can be attached to

appropriate music. For instance, in the earlier years of our nation's history a genre of tavern songs arose which wedded godless lyrics to musical pieces which sounded very much like traditional hymns. Some have argued that this genre of tavern song serves as proof that music is inherently amoral. What such an argument fails to understand is that such songs borrowed tunes which were originally created by artists influenced by the theistic philosophy of the Reformation and post-Reformation eras. The music was appropriate; the ill-fitted lyrics were depraved. If a prankster affixed a vulgar statement to the Mona Lisa, would this prove that every painting on earth was amoral?

Godless musicians have boldly claimed to design their musical creations, not only to carry and adorn the godless lyrics of their God-defiant works, but to actually communicate their world-view through music. In like manner, Christian musicians must understand with their Christian forefathers that they must create and employ sounds that serve not merely as innocuous transportation for doxological lyrics, but which communicate a doxological message themselves. Just as it is possible to wed godless lyrics to godly music, so it is quite possible to join God-honoring words to fleshly music.

To this end, the musical expressions employed by a worshiping assembly of believers should be free of the sensuality, confusion and hopelessness so prevalent in the world's music. Rather, worship music should be characterized by the distinctive love, joy, and peace that the church enjoys in the Spirit. It also follows that the physical ministry of spiritual music must be distinct from musical performance which magnifies the flesh (in its use of the voice, bodily movements, dress etc.).

### **Principle of Theological Accuracy**

The words of all music used in the worship of the assembly must correspond to reality as revealed in the Word of God. Words that violate Scriptural principles, or inaccurately interpret Scriptural truths,

cannot be justified by their traditional usage or by their marriage to a favorable tune.

Authentic worship is inherently truthful (John 4:24) and corresponds to the character of the One who personifies truth (John 14:6). The worship of God's people must be safeguarded against falsehood including such error as creeps into the church under the shroud of a pleasing or familiar tune.

### **Principle of Appropriateness**

*Concerning Selection of Music.* There is a vast quantity of honorable music that is not necessarily appropriate for the assembly. Since the body of Christ assembles for the express purpose of worshiping God, learning His Word, and building one another up in the faith, only music that accords with these purposes is appropriate for the assembly. On occasion the church may gather for purposes other than those just stated, and at times, wisdom may sanction a looser application. However, music in the assembly should always be characterized as specifically appropriate to the biblical purpose of the assembly.

*Concerning Ministry of Music.* Those who minister to the assembly in music should express truth with sincerity. That is, the message of the music should be a heart-felt desire and growing reality in the life of the musician. It is inappropriate for one who harbors anger, and resentment toward God, for instance, or who is living in any other unconfessed sin, to sing in assembly, "My Jesus I love Thee I know Thou art mine, for Thee all the follies of sin I resign."

Without exception, every minister of music stands in need of change and growth. Nonetheless, the musician should endeavor to sing only what appropriately reflects his heart attitude. Otherwise, he becomes an actor hiding behind a mask of hypocrisy and thus fails to worship God in truth.

### **Principle of Creativity**

It should be understood that much of the Christian music composed in the past several decades violates the spirit of this document to varying degrees. Sadly, the popular reception of worldly philosophy by the church and the effects of a culturally pervasive consumerism have combined to create among contemporary Christians receptivity to cheap music and flawed lyrics which fail to promote the splendor of God.

The unfortunate response of some well-meaning believers is to anathematize almost any musical composition written in recent years. The cultural commission issued by God to man, however (Genesis 1:26-28; chapters 2, 3), demands a musical philosophy which will not quarantine every composition labeled "contemporary." Rather, we must encourage musical progress, development, and innovation with a view to the progressive subjugation of sound to the glory of God until the return of Christ. This goal elicits vibrant, fresh musical expressions from God's people (Psalm 33:3) and calls into question the church which is content to bury itself in the successes of the past while summarily dismissing the creative efforts of the present.

Admittedly there remains a yawning chasm between contemporary musical expressions and the goal of subjugating music to the glory of God. A biblical perspective on creativity will, however, encourage us to create our own songs and to ferret out and employ redeeming elements from the creative efforts of contemporary artists. Much contemporary music suffers primarily from poor interpretation and performance. Often the creative worth of such music can be liberated from its unholy packaging and faithfully employed to the glorification of God.

In this process, two assertions must be maintained. First, the character/theology of a composer does not alone delimit the appropriateness of each of his separate works. That is to say, the suitability of a specific musical piece to God-magnifying purposes is not determined by how the composer lives and believes but by the

actual worth of that particular composition. The discerning eye may find obvious reflections of deficient theology in the life-work of a particular musician. This does not mean that such an artist is incapable of creating an honorable piece of work on occasion.

Second, it is creatively self-defeating and historically irresponsible to abandon time-honored musical expressions. Too many Christians readily embrace new musical creations with little thought as to their creative worth. (Often these "new" creations are nothing more than reheated versions of secular culture's most recent discard). In the same motion, older works are too often rejected (often unwittingly) as unusable in a contemporary setting. An accurate perception of the cultural mandate realizes that contemporary creativity stands upon the shoulders of musical works which have stood the test of time. These classical expressions are not to be discarded or demoted, but honored. Only the culturally illiterate and socially irresponsible are comfortable with the rootlessness which attends the historical amnesia plaguing the church today.

### **Principle of Love**

Every musical ministrations should evidence love toward all believers. Music should be avoided which might hinder people from worshiping with a clear conscience. Music should never be used as a bludgeon to challenge, offend, or "make a statement." At times, music that may be appropriate in the home or acceptable to an individual may genuinely offend another believer. In loving deference, such music should be avoided in the assembly.

It must also be maintained, however, that there is no biblical obligation to cater to every sensitivity. The distinction should be drawn between genuine spiritual offense and personal musical preference. The goal is not necessarily to gage the selection of music in the church by the preferences of the least flexible members, but to eliminate any music which truly hinders worship by offending legitimate spiritual sensitivities.

It must also be maintained that true love will unite us together in the communal pursuit of holiness (Ephesians 1:18; 2:1, 2, 13-22; 4:12-16). The pursuit of communal maturation will not permit the promotion of "liturgical apartheid" wherein the body is segregated into disparate assemblies who gather in exclusion of one another in order to enjoy a favored "style" of worship music. Nor will genuine love permit the minimization of divergent musical "tastes" within the assembly as a matter of mere "preference." Rather, the musical expressions of an assembly of believers reflects a distinct communal leaning - a leaning which should promote a unity of spirit in the mutual pursuit of spiritual maturity.

### **Principle of Authority**

Music is an invaluable gift from God. It is a vital link between our soul and His and can significantly enhance a church's ability to bring Him glory. Yet the flesh can so corrupt God's good gift of music that the musical ministry of a church can actually bring Him dishonor - notwithstanding the deafening applause which often attends such music.

Further, God's people can become so self-centered that God's gift of music becomes a rope with which a cruel "tug of war" is waged. In either event, the gift of God becomes fruitless and His people fail to enjoy the blessing of heart-felt worship and musical admonition in the assembly.

While the principles of this document are offered as preparation against the disruption Satan may desire to initiate within our assembly on this matter, considerable room remains for personal interpretation. The unity stemming from holiness that God desires to nurture among us is progressive. This means that we will not enjoy universal agreement regarding every musical goal or regarding the appropriateness of every musical selection.

It is imperative that we work together to resolve differences in loving deference to one another and in faithful submission to Godly

leadership within the assembly. As the leadership of this church seeks to exercise watch-care over souls and to lead the flock to holiness, passages such as Ephesians 4:2,3; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; and Hebrews 13:17, must be actively esteemed.

By God's grace, Eden Baptist Church will maintain her commitment to God-honoring music and will continue to grow and expand in this vital aspect of the Christian walk. In order to do so, we must nurture in our hearts a passion for God and for the promotion of His splendor. By His grace, we will continue to pursue this end together by means of genuinely spiritual music!