

Selection of Worship Songs @ Higher Rock Christian Church, Quezon City, Philippines

When we select worship songs to be included in the line-up, we must always consider what the apostle Paul tells us in Col. 3:16, that the Word of Christ dwells richly within us with all wisdom when we teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We must endeavor to recover the authority of Scripture in our worship and in our music for it is fundamental to a true God-centered worship. In other words, song selections could fall under one of three biblical categories: (1) "teaching"; (2) "admonition"; and (3) "singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Quoting from an article written by Rebecca Watters, "Music is very powerful because it teaches whether or not we perceive that it does. And the more a person is inclined to subjective, relativistic thinking, the stronger music's influence will be on that person. It is therefore a potent purveyor of heresies. How then should pastors and church music directors, who seriously take their biblical mandate, evaluate the music the church uses in worship? By applying the regulative principle of Sola Scriptura.... True worship is faithful to the doctrine of God as revealed in Scripture... Kim Riddlebarger argues: 'This is not to say that worship is not to be emotional or that one is not to experience God during worship, but worship must be based on correct knowledge of God, not an ecstatic experience of God...'"

In biblical worship, we must examine three aspects if we are to bring the music in line with Scripture: 1) the words that we sing, 2) the melodies of the words we sing, and 3) the instruments we use to accompany the singing.

We will just take the first 2 aspects which is significant to song choices in our worship.

The first aspect- the content of the songs of the church must be doctrinally sound.

We who belong to the Higher Rock Christian Church Worship Team strive to be very careful with the lyrics contained in a song choice. They must teach biblical principles that adhere to the whole counsel of God. Mrs. Watters presented an example in her article of a song commonly used by churches that does not present clear biblical teaching: "Consider this song:

Jesus, we enthrone You.
We proclaim You are King.
Standing here in the midst of us.
We lift You up with our praise.
And as we worship, build Your throne.
Come, Lord Jesus, And take Your place.

Ephesians 1:19-22 clearly teaches that God, "the Father of glory" (v.17), raised Jesus from the dead, "and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion..." who then enthrones Christ? Is it us of the Father?

The content of the songs must be God-centered and not man-centered. Consider this example:

All my hopes, all of my plans,
my heart and my hands are lifted to You.
Lord, I offer my life to You
Everything I've been through
Use it for Your glory
Lord, I offer my days to You
Lifting my praise to You
As a pleasing sacrifice
Lord, I offer You my life.

"The purpose of music in worship is to assist the congregation in worshipping God, not to encourage believers to focus on themselves...The songs must handle accurately the word of truth.

The second aspect is evaluating the melodies to which we sing the words. While it is important that a melody is sing-able for the congregation, it must likewise support the content of the song... Determining the appropriateness of the melody must also pass through another sieve: does it 'make provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts?' Does the melody truly exalt God or does it appeal primarily to the carnal tastes of man and his desire to be entertained?"

These are some considerations when selecting songs in a worship line-up. The Book of Psalms has given us a model for what we are to sing. They contain a very rich variety of songs that we can and should sing to God-- joyful praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 146-150); reflections on creation (Ps. 19, 104); a recounting of the saving work of God in Christ (Ps. 2, 22, 24 and 110) and meditations on God's Word (Ps. 119). There are also psalms of lamentation and repentance (Ps. 32, 51, and 137). We also bring back the hymns that are predominantly based on Scriptural passages.