

# SING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING

## INTRODUCTION

Often a song leader will direct a song that has a line or wording that is not true or is not consistent with what the bible says.

It will be our objective to learn more of the history, background and purpose of singing in the Lord's church. OUR SUBJECT WILL BE SING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING

Of course we must do this with the question in mind, "What does the Bible Say?"

Then we will move thru the history of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

We will challenge some of what we sing and we will try to better know just what and why we are singing what we sing.

We will look at many of the song writers and their motivation for writing these songs.

Naturally we will have to touch on the mechanical instruments used by some in their worship.

We will look at what the early church fathers, the reformation leaders, and the restoration leaders have had to say.

And we will begin this study with "WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?"

Then: TYPES OF SONGS, HISTORY OF SINGING, SINGING, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING, SINGING – WHO? WHAT IS NOT SINGING? SONG WORDING, INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC WHAT THE RESTORERS SAID, WHO WROTE THE SONG WE SING?

## HISTORY OF CHURCH SINGING

In looking into the history of Christian Music we discover that there is very little written just about this subject. The church fathers down thru history that referred to music usually did so briefly while directing their attention to some other subject.

Most of their writing that does mention music in the church refers to psalms which had been adopted from the synagogue and applied to Christian worship. Those psalms were often chanted to a simple tune, not merely recited. It is easier to remember the thoughts and rhymes of a song than of poem without a tune.

Early writers were clear in drawing a line between the delights of the world and the holiness required by God.

They denounced musical pagan practices and the use of instruments that went with it. They deal with the use of music in what they called the liturgy.

Liturgy is the organized form of worship which developed over time into a ritual. It would be in various forms at different places and cultures, beginning with just keeping everything happening “decently and in order” until it became a standard practice, and then a ritual.

In **1 Corinthians 14:26** Paul mentions that some have a Psalm, evidently to sing. He is writing here about order in the assembly of the church and says, *“Whenever you come together, each of you has a Psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done decently and in order.”*

Those were the days when they had prophets among them receiving revelations and very little of the written word, they had people capable of speaking in foreign languages, which for those not of that language would need interpreters, and they also had those, as it says, each of them had a psalm to recite or to sing. All of this was to be done decently and in order. This developed into what we call an “order of worship”.

As an example, some have a regular welcome, 2 songs and a prayer, 2 songs and scripture reading, then the song before and the Lord's table, sermon time, invitation song or not, collection, closing song and a prayer.

The simplest and often common ritual, or order of worship, is 2 songs. Opening prayer, 1 song, Lord's Table, collection, one song, sermon or lesson, invitation song, closing song, announcements, and closing prayer.

Sometimes 5 or 7 songs at the start of a meeting will be followed by prayer and the Lord's Table, more songs spaced in. and some preaching, with a closing song and prayer.

We have had something like this; Welcome and prayer by an elder, 3 songs, scripture reading and prayer, a song or 2 and then a sermon, Invitation song, collection, song before the Lord's table, announcements, closing prayer, and a word about our Bible Classes. We don't call it liturgy or ritual; we call it 'The order of worship'.

Some place greater emphasis on singing and some on the teaching, or sermon.

Many years ago, Cliff Ganus wrote in a Gospel Advocate article that "Church music today is being affected adversely and influenced strongly by secular music. The more we can know about what the Bible says concerning music and how early Christians understood and applied this, the stronger will be our guard against corrupting the music of the church."

It is very clear that the church in the beginning did not use mechanical instruments of music in worship of God. There is universal agreement that the 1<sup>st</sup> instrument of music was introduced more than 600 years after the 1<sup>st</sup> church of Christ came into existence in AD 30.

While I do mention instrumental music from time to time it is not a part of the lessons by which we discuss the command to "Sing with the

understanding”. Instruments have no part in the history of the Lord’s church nor were they ever authorized by the New Testament.

By the time that the organ began to be used, which was authorized by Pope Vitalian between AD 657 and 672 the church was already an apostate organization ruled by a hierarchy of popes, bishops, priests, councils, synods, and even emperors. This action by Pope Vitalian eventually was a major part in the separation between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches which still do not use instruments.

Later the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (that we will talk about at a later time) they took exception to the unauthorized innovations of the Roman Catholic Church. Many of these leaders of the Lutheran and British (Anglican) Reformation objected to the use of Instruments of music in ‘Christian’ worship. And I am not their judge, just a fruit inspector, but I use that term loosely. You can know them by their fruits.

The widespread use of instrumental music in the worship of many religious organizations began in the 18 century A.D. It is a recent innovation, following the lead of the Roman Catholic Church organization. It is a sign of apostasy.

THE MUSIC OF THE CHURCH from the ancient Hebrew praise in psalm, thru the Medieval, Renaissance. Romantic periods, did not change much.

The older music in our book, (and even it has been rearranged,) was a Gregorian chant used by Isaac Watts in his song of 1707, “*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.*”

The Gregorian Chants were made official chants of the Roman Catholic Church in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century when Pope Gregory had them compiled for the (their} liturgy and helped to disseminate them thru out Europe. They were also known as Plain chant or Plain song. They did not yet do 4- part harmony.

The Reformation changed everything including church music. In 1529, Martin Luther wrote, "*A Mighty Fortress is Our God.*" and he wrote the words and the music.

In 1551 Louis Bougeois wrote the Music which went into The Genevan Psalter, a song book for the Reformed persuasion, which in 1561 became the music for Wm. Kethe's words "*All People that on Earth do Dwell.*"

The 1650 Psalter of the Scottish Church was a favorite of Alexander Campbell when he was a Presbyterian. Next to his Bible the song book was his most important book.

In 1674 the "*Doxology*" written by Thomas Ken became the most popular song and was sung by all of Christendom. A doxology is an expression of praise to God. At the time Ken was a chaplain of Winchester Cathedral in England. He wrote 3 hymns for the boys at Winchester College, one for morning, evening, and midnight services at the cathedral. Ken then added these 4 lines as the final stanza;

*"Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

When I was raised in the Christian Reformed Church the sound of this song being blasted out by the organ and the mumbling of the congregation usually meant we could wake up from our day dreams now and go outside for the break between church and Sunday school and enjoy a cigarette out by the street light with the other men and boys. Yes, I started smoking at the age of twelve like most of the other boys. This was the same year I was part of the Confirmation Ceremony where those who had completed all their Catechism classes confirmed and accepted their infant baptism.

Isaac Watts who lived from 1674- 1748 had a great deal of impact on improving the writing of songs for the churches.

He is generally acknowledged as, "The father of English Hymnody" He wrote more than 600 hymns. He was an English theologian and writer of hymn texts. He published 2 hymn collections in 1707 The story goes that as a young man he complained to his father about the style of songs sung in the church. His father told him that if he didn't like the songs that he should write some better songs, if he could! Among these songs we still sing are, "*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.*" And "*O God our Help in Ages past.*"

Newer songs then began to be written by many writers starting in the 1700's and an explosion of song writing occurred in the late 1800's Then it moved to Southern Gospel, Negro Spirituals, and concluding with our contemporary praise songs.

In 1745, William Williams wrote "*Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah.*" We have it in our books written to 2 different tunes. The older music we have is from 1830 by Thomas Hastings.

New songs were becoming more common then, in 1776, the year our country was declaring freedom from England, Augustus Toplady wrote the song, "*Rock of Ages*"

In 1779, John Newton wrote the famous song "*Amazing Grace*" which is still used in churches of all kinds, used at funerals often, and after every national disaster for a week or two. John Newton also wrote, "*Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken*" and "*How Sweet the name of Jesus Sounds*" that same year.

In the early 1800's Reginald Heber gave us "*Holy, Holy, Holy.*" He also wrote one which I don't know if we sing it, but it's in our book. It is called "*God, Who Made Earth and Heaven.*" This was written to an old Traditional Welsh Melody.

Many of the songs of the reformation period are not used in our song books, and some of the songs in our books are not used in those protestant church song books.

When I was looking at in Alton Howard's book "Song of Faith and Praise" which we use; The song that was written by Robert Robinson in 1758 with music written by A. Nettleton. "*O thou Fount of every blessing,*" I could find it in 6 books used by churches of Christ but it was not used in Baptist, Methodist, and Reformed or Christian Reformed, or Lutheran song books.

I was looking for the history of the songs of the church so the songs of the protestant organizations, while in many instances are used by the church, it is not my concern what they use, only what the Lords' church has been using.

In 1847, Henry Lyte wrote "*Abide with me.*" and Sabine Baring Gould in 1864 -5 wrote "*Onward Christian Soldiers*" and "*Now the day is Over.*" but then...

In the late 1800's there was an explosion of new songs from writers like Fanny Crosby, Francis Havergal, Phillip Bliss, and Horatio Spafford's *It is Well with My Soul.* And many others less famous.

In the early 1900's we had T.O. Chisholm, Tillit S. Teddlie, Robert Arnold, F. L. Eiland, Albert Brumley, Wm. Thompson, and many others.

Then in the late 1900's after 1950 another time when a great number of good songs were written and accepted by the brotherhood. Songs by Bill & Gloria Gaither from the 1970's until now; Twila Paris, and from our brotherhood, Alton Howard and Tommy Wheeler.

And what is happening in present day music for the church and where does the Christian stand?

In an era of rapidly changing morals and life styles in America and in the world the Bible must continue to be the standard for new themes. Some new themes are being exploded on stage, movies, television, and hand held devices. Some groups use the Biblical themes but have little respect for the

Bible and its teachings, only how well it sells. Do the new songs we sing or listen to help or harm our influence as a Christian? We need to be aware that people are taught thru music. When we sing we are *“teaching and admonishing.”* Colossians 3; 16

Regardless of our age or position in life, we, as Christians, have the responsibility to “discern good and evil: (Hebrews 5:14) and to *“Sing with the Understanding.”*

There is old saying, *“I don’t care who makes the laws of the land, if I may make its music.”*

## OLD TESTAMENT VS NEW TESTAMENT MUSIC

Thru the years many good reasons have been given for not using mechanical instruments in Christian worship.

The instrument is simply out of place in Christian worship.

The Old Testament Law was silent about the use of the musical instrument in worship.

It was not until we get to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel that we find the use of a harp or harps that David played. Stringed instruments were not mentioned until the psalms. Trumpets had been used but only to call the people to assemblies or to war.

The Old Testament Mosaic Law was a system tied to material things.

They offered bulls and goats as sacrifice for sin.

They built a Tabernacle and later a Temple for the dwelling place of God.

The covenant was represented by the Ark of the Covenant where God was and where Moses was to meet God.

They burned incense made of spices and gums.

Their praise to God in song beginning with David was accompanied with a material instrument such as the harp or other stringed inventions. Amos 6:5 tells us they "*invented the use of these instruments for themselves like David.*"

But when we move from the Old Testament worship to the new Covenant (Testament) one of the most conspicuous changes is that we no longer see worship with material things.

The blood of bulls and goat is no longer needed as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus paid it all with the blood sacrifice of the Son of God, once for all! God no longer dwells in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24) but in the hearts of His (1Cor. 3:16-17)

Now we worship God with our heart and make melody in our heart as we sing to God and one another. (John 4:21) Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria, *“God is Spirit and those who worship Him, must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”*

The sweet smell that goes up to God is no longer the smoke of spices or gums, but the sweet odor of the prayers of God’s saints.

We no longer offer a dead animal to God as our sacrifice, but God desires our entire bodies as a living sacrifice, (Romans 12: 1-2)

And like all the rest, our praise to God is no longer done on the material instrument, but on the divinely created instrument of the heart and the human voice.

God is no longer worshipped with man’s hand but with the heart.

Under a system of material worship those material instruments, though not commanded, were acceptable and useful, but not under a system of worship that is to be “in spirit and in truth!

My own father was a strong advocate of the use of mechanical instruments in worship, and when he stayed with us for a few months in 1976, shortly before his death, and was exposed to the singing in the church of Christ, where he attended with us, he wrote me a small note on a piece of scrap card stock, and I still have it. He wrote his reason for not being willing to give it up. He spelled it ‘Musick’ M U S I C K (He was an old Dutchman) and then wrote the verse from **Romans 14:14**, *“I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”*

He was from those who grew up with the instruments and asked questions like, *“Why not use harps & organs?”* Today that would include bands. Another argument was, *“The church was never told to stop using instrumental music.”*

The obvious answer is, *“The instrument was never used in the church so why would they be told to stop using them?”*

That would be the same as telling the church to stop baptizing babies. The church never did baptize babies. It was those apostate religious organizations that started those things for themselves. The scripture has never changed so the church cannot.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SINGING in the NEW TESTAMENT?

In **Colossians 3:16** OUR VERSE IS, and we repeat it often in this series, *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* And in verse 17, *“Whatsoever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”*

And OUR OTHER VERSE IS in **Ephesians 5:19** *“Speaking (or addressing) one another in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

That says it all!

## SINGING

WHY SHOULD WE SING?

WHAT SHOULD WE SING?

WHEN SHOULD WE SING?

WHERE SHOULD WE SING?

HOW SHOULD WE SING?

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS WE ARE ASKING SO THAT WE MAY SING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING!

### WHY SHOULD WE SING?

The most basic purpose of singing in worship is praising God.

Singing is only powerful when it is personal! If you learn a song well and sing it often then it will come back to you with out thinking when in the time of trial or joy.

Church music is not confined to time, nationality, certain composers or schools of music. Good A Cappella music reinforces the message of the words. Oh, by the way, to say that A Cappella music is used in the church is a form of redundancy. A Cappella means as 'sung in church'. It may be soft, loud, slow, steady, or fast. Certain words will be emphasized and our feelings in worship are to be compatible with group participation. It will produce an acknowledgment of the glory of God, "*For God is King of all the earth, sing praises with understanding.*" **Psalm 47:7**

What does the Bible say?

**Psalm 147:1** “Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant’ and praise is beautiful.

**2 Chronicles 22:21**, This is Jehoshaphat, King of Judah; “He appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of his Holiness, and to say, Praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever.”

**Psalm 21:13.** So we will sing and Praise thy power.”

**Isaiah 24; 14,** “They shall sing for the majesty of the Lord.”

### .WHEN SHOULD WE SING? And WHERE SHOULD WE SING?

We have already covered this when we asked “WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY” IN OUR INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY. But we can do a quick review here. Singing can be done anytime, not just during the assembly for worship. In Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas were in prison.

Singing even outside the church assembly has positive effects.

The reasons for the songs in the worship are to praise God and acknowledge the glory of His name, and to edify, teaching and admonishing, the brethren, it says “one another” or “Speaking to yourselves in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. This teaching and admonishing even happens in a prison as we saw in that prison event with Paul and Silas.

Another reason is to give thanks to God for who He is and all the blessings of life we receive, both temporal and spiritual. We can give thanks to God in prayers or in songs anytime.

Singing is an expression of the heart **READ JAMES 5:13.** “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms.” This demonstrates the reaction to emotions which happen anytime.

**1 Chronicles 16: 23-27** begins to give us answers. *“Sing unto the Lord, all the earth. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; Glory and honor are in his presence; Strength and gladness are in his place.”*

**Psalm 30: 4 - 5**, *“Sing unto the Lord, O you saints of His. and give thanks at the remembrance of His Holiness, for His anger endureth for a moment, in his favor of life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”*

**Isaiah 12:5** *“Sing unto the Lord; for He has done excellent things. This is known in all the earth.*

**Exodus 15: 1, 2,-11**, (The Song of Miriam.) *“I will sing unto the Lord. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God...and I will exalt Him. Who is like you, O lord/ Who is like you? Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.”*

**Psalm 100**, *“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing, Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He that has made us and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name, For the Lord is good, and his truth endues to all generations.”*

Praise is everywhere in the Bible. As a duty, and as a natural delight. We sell ourselves short when we miss out on its blessings.

### WHAT SHOULD WE SING?

What does the Bible say?

**Psalm 96:1**, *“O sing unto the Lord new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth.*

**Psalm 98:1**, *“O sing unto the Lord new song; for He has done marvelous things.*

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY? About when & where to sing?

**Psalm 104: 33**, *"I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live." "While I have my being."*

**Psalm 89:1**, *"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever."*

**Hebrews 2:12** (Jesus said this quoting Psalm 42:4,) *I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise to thee."*

**Hebrews 13:15**, *By Him therefore let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually."*

**Matthew 28:30**, After the Passover meal and instituting the Remembrance of Him in the Lord's Table Jesus and his disciples *"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."*

**Colossians 3:17**, *"Whatsoever you in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord."* A Christian should learn this early in the Christian walk and remember it always. *"Do all in the name of the Lord."*

Singing gives us spiritual refreshment anytime, anywhere, whether in individual situations or in a congregational setting. It can be a time to renew mind and spirit. Many times when traveling with our children we would break out the hymn books and sing going down the road. It leaves pleasant memories of a good day.

Often a youth group would use our home for their gatherings and spent an hour or so in singing.

Singing at funerals in some places is quite common.

When traveling thru Israel on a tour bus our tour group spontaneously sang the old familiar songs.

In mission settings in foreign lands or in the States small group singing was also spontaneous. Praising God and enjoying the fellowship of the saints anywhere.

In the Nashville area they have Friday night singings which rotate around various participating congregations and sing until midnight. And sometimes those who were outside of Christ had an opportunity to learn or even to join in those songs familiar to them.

Songs like, “*God’s family*” or “*Bless be the tie that binds*” can be heart wrenching and even draw tears when greeting or departing from the beloved brothers and sisters from other cities or parts of the world.

God can hear the melody from the hearts wherever you are.

### And HOW SHOULD WE SING?

In **Colossians 3:16** we read “*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” And in verse 17, “*Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*” With grace and thankfulness in your hearts!*

When we fail to be inspired or motivated to action. The solution is found in **1 Corinthians 14:15 and reading thru verse 17**. “*I will pray with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when you bless with the spirit, how shall he the occupies the room of the unlearned say Amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he does not understand what you say? For you truly give thanks, but the other is not edified.*” With understanding, not only that we may understand, but that others may understand what you say.

Singing loses its quality when singers get in a rut of habitual worship. Habitual worship does not require thinking, and we will then sing without attention to the words and to the meaning of the songs.

Would this even be worship? If it is not in spirit and in truth? We want our preaching to be scriptural, dynamic, and challenging. And our singing should be also.

For many in the religious world singing is expected to be entertainment.

The charge made by Isaac Watts should not have any validity today. We have the benefit of his songs and other great song writers as well. Watts said in his time, "*The singing of God's praises is the part of worship nearest heaven, and its performance is among the worst of earth.*" Wow, what a terrible condition the singing in his time must have become. We should never let that be said of us!

The human voice is a gift from God. By the use of this delicate instrument, the singing person releases his happiness and praise to God.

Do we understand what we have been singing? Do we put any feeling into the thought? Do we put expression into the words? When you sing "How Great Thou Art;" Are we singing it habitually, and without expression? 3<sup>rd</sup> verse, "*And when I think of God His son not sparing, He bled and died to take away my sin*" does it bring a tear to my eye? Did I feel any twinge in my gut?

We should try always to sing as the scripture designates, making melody in our hearts, singing with grace, and with understanding. The song "*His Grace reaches me*" is written for congregational singing. The base part in some books and I think the Paperless Songbook has the base line as Ah- ah- ah- ah. We should be singing words, not sound.

Where is the understanding in the sound Ah –ah- ah- ah? We should be doing things decently and in order in the worship assembly. Some of our songs are written as 2 or 4 songs being sung simultaneously, one over the other. Is this innovation a proper way to edify one another? Is it done decently and in order or is it chaos?

If we use the song, "*Though Your Sins be as Scarlet,*" as an invitation song, can these words be used to teach and admonish? Can they simulate you to repentance? Would you be among those singing to teach and admonish with the understanding? Would you respond to that invitation? "*He will forgive*

*your transgressions and remember them no more.*” This is a wonderful thought any time!

Singing is most beautiful when we learn and practice and strive to sing well. By it we are made happy. By it we are stirred to do greater things in the vineyard of the Lord. We should give close attention to the songs we sing.

We should teach and admonish one another and praise God with the fruit of our lips. We should sing songs of comfort, hope, and joy. We should sing of the goodness of God and the future home of the saints. By singing we can pour out our feelings to God and each other and be mutually blessed by it. May our hearts be blended together as well as our voices that we might all worship and serve God according to the pattern found in the New Testament.

**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?** About how to sing?

**Psalm 67:4** *”O let the nations be glad and sing for joy...”*

**Psalm 81: 1** *“Sing aloud unto God our strength. Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.*

**2 Chronicles 29: 30** *And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.”*

**James 5:13,** *Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.”*

**1 Corinthians 14:15,** *I sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”*

We should have a whole hearted desire to give God our very best and make our singing inspirational. Let’s get excited about the opportunity to praise God in song.

**GOD IS THE AUDIENCE!  
EVERY TIME WE SING.**

**LET’S TRY TO SING TO PLEASE GOD**

## WHERE DID OUR SONG BOOKS COME FROM?

In the English language hymns originated 1<sup>st</sup> from translations of songs founded on the Psalms of David and then songs from England from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There are some songs that were composed then which provide good thoughts of Praise to God in a sound scriptural way. Coming from old England and its language is why we have so many using the words such as “Thee” & “Thou,” for you, and “Ye” for You’al’.

Our hymnal roots are in the Psalters. (Songs based on the Psalms.)

Alexander Campbell’s hymnals, first published in 1828 have influenced our songs. He used The Scottish Psalter when he was a Presbyterian but His Hymnals always contained “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual songs.”

Even after the War between the States in an era called “Revivalism” some of our hymnal editors continued in the tradition set by Campbell in their books.

- J. H. Fillmore’s *‘New Christian Hymn and Tune Book’* (1882-1887)
- C.C. Cline’s *‘Christian Standard Church Hymnal’* (1888)
- Gospel Advocate’s *‘Christian Hymns’* edited by E.G. Sewell and R.M. McIntosh (1889) These were later followed by *‘Christian Hymns 2’* and *‘Christian Hymns 3’* (1956) Edited by L.O. Sanderson.
- In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century;
- W.E.M. Hackleman’s *‘Gloris in Excelsis’* (1905) and *‘Hymns Ecclesis’* (1911)
- E.L. Jorgenson’s *‘Great Songs of the Church’* (1921) (Used in Kewane 1970’s)
- Ellis Jay Crum’s *‘Sacred Selections’* (1956)
- Firm Foundation’s *‘The Majestic Hymnal’* (1959)
- Alton H. Howard’s *‘Songs of the Church’* (1971) – (1975-1977)
- Ellis Jay Crum’s *‘Special Sacred Selections’* (1977)

## WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

### THE BEAUTY OF WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

Many things are very beautiful and appealing to the mind and are close to our hearts. A beautiful and meaningful song is among these pleasures in life.

The act of singing involves the whole person, it engages the mind, the heart, and the organs of speech. The intellect, emotions, and physical actions are all involved.

There are 12 verses (passages) in the New Testament that refer to singing. Matthew 26: 30 Mark 14: 26 Acts 16:25 Romans 15 : 9 First Corinthians 14 : 15 & 26 Ephesians 5: 19 Colossians 3: 16 Hebrews 2:115 James 5: 13 Revelations 5:9 , 14: 3, & 15:3.

### THE PURPOSES FOR WORSHIP IN SONG INCLUDE:

A primary purpose is in praising God! The adoration we feel toward the almighty God results in the natural desire outpouring praise in song , Col 3: 16 & Heb. 13:15. It is associated in the Old Testament with sacrifice itself, as in Psalm 26: 6 , 141 -2 & 50 :14 & 23. and Jonah 2:9. Singing helps us to look forward to eternal praise as mentioned in Revelation 5:9 14:3 & 15:3.

Singing can express deep feelings as in weddings or funerals. Some examples of this are found in Matthew 26:30 Acts 16: 25 Luke 19 : 38- 40, & James 5: 13. Singing may be used to offer prayer and confession, as in the Psalms. But when singing as a prayer it must include that it is done in Jesus name, as with other facets of worship , edification is a purpose of singing. (First. Corinthians 14:26) Edifying is to build up or increase faith or morality , to instruct or benefit morally, Edification was a prominent feature of Christianity in the first century. Ephesians 5: 19 stresses this function through song,

We need to have a desire in our heart to pour forth praise! An understanding of the expressions and meanings of the song should be known, and understood. I Cor. 14 : 16.

Participate with what God has given you. A voice (good or Not) He want to hear from you. From the heart! This is the instrument God has given you.

There will be many variations in congregational singing.

## WHO IS TO DO THE SINGING?

Singing has the purpose to give spiritual encouragement and comfort to those who need it.

The New Testament does not reveal the style of singing. 4-part harmony was not known then, some songs would be a statement and answer format with different parts sung by different singers. Sometime a cantor would sing the narrative and the congregation would respond with a chorus. However, it was done, it was to accomplish "*Speaking to one other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.* We have no evidence in the scriptures about any form of singing except congregational and personal, and never in an entertainment setting.

**Psalm 107** may be one of these where the congregation would sing "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.*" Then the cantor would sing or say another portion of the psalm and the congregation would again sing, "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.*"

**Psalm 136** is a classic example of this. One person or group would say or sing the narrative, and the congregation would respond with, "*For His mercy endureth for ever.*" Every one of the 26 verses repeat this, "*For His mercy endureth for ever.*"

There is no pattern in the scriptures for styles of singing because the Bible is silent about styles.

We are told that we should be "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" And that we should "do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

All of these instances would teach and admonish others. We also have many opportunities to instruct those about us.

All can sing, women and children can participate in singing; it is not only the men who can teach in singing, but all can do it together.

By teaching the word and offering praise to His name, many a burden has been lifted, many a heart has been made lighter because of the song of someone near or someone they know. It can bring great comfort when we sing about the promises of God. Our young people can establish and strengthen their faith and inspire them to stay close to God because of the songs they sing. The song will go where ever they go.

Our texts for congregational singing are **Colossians 3:16** where we read *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”*

And in **Ephesians 5:19** *“Speaking (or addressing) one another in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

While nothing in their contexts suggests this is referring to the assembly of the whole church, these texts do show clearly, they are not something done in private. They say “speak to one another.” You can’t do that alone.

We can sing praises when we are alone, even in the shower, but that is not what these verses are about.

Second century testimony affirms that Christians continued to sing in their assemblies .Pliny the Younger was appointed by the Roman emperor, Trajan, who ruled A.D. 98-117, to oversee the affairs of Bithynia in Asia Minor. Pliny wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan which shows that Christians who persisted in their faith were being executed, He says, *“They (The Christians) affirmed, however, the whole of the guilt or error was that they were it the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ, as to a God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, “ etc.*

Around A.D. 117 Ignatius of Antioch was transported by soldiers from Antioch to Rome for martyrdom as a Christian. While on this journey he wrote letters to several churches with which he was familiar. In one letter he says, “Now all of you together become a choir so that being harmonious in concord and receiving a key note from God, in unison you may sing with one voice thru Jesus Christ to the Father” (Ignatius, Ephesians 4)

These writings are not inspired scripture and do not have the authority of the Bible and may reflect errors, especially in church organization, that were already beginning to appear, but they add evidence to what the Bible does say on that the early church was accustomed to congregational singing as part of the worship of God and the edification of one another in their assemblies.

Christians have always, across the centuries sung praises to God and taught and encouraged one another in song. They have not always used 4- part harmony and often used responsive chants based on the Psalms.

In looking at information left us in old manuscripts it is difficult to make a distinction between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The oldest song book was from Syria.

**Pliny** (112A.D.) was impressed with the hymns and chants offered to Christ and thru him as a mediator in the early Christian gatherings.

**Justin** who wrote Apology” in A.D. 150 refers to hymns as they were associated with prayers.

**Origen.** About 230 A.D. states that the early church members were praying and singing in their own languages even in assemblies with mixed membership.

Millie and I were in Muskegon Michigan one weekend and went to the nearest church of Christ. We didn't know it, but it was a Spanish congregation. I felt sorry for that preacher. He would say something in Spanish and then repeat in just for us in English. I don't remember much about the singing but they mixed that up for us also.

They also mixed Spanish & English songs in meetings for us when we were in Peru with medical missions also.

It is doubtful that we are duplicating the sounds and forms of songs offered by our long-departed brothers and sisters thru out the centuries.

We do have some inconsistencies even today. We rarely do responsive singing as there are few in our song books, and our tradition is congregational singing in worship. Only a few of our songs are chants and they have been edited to update them to our traditions.

We have some songs that are sung as an echo. "*Unto thee Oh Lord.*" is an example. Melody is sung by one group and the echo by another group.

We have some songs that in some congregations can be sung as responsive "*Nothing but the blood of Jesus*" is one I have heard done this way, not here but elsewhere. It is written in our book as complete 4-part congregational singing.

We do not use choruses, choirs, or small group singing or solos until we say a final Amen in our formal worship period, and then we will allow a high school or College chorus (Choir) to entertain us with religious singing. These groups sometime include solos, duets, or responsive singing in their performance. We divorce this from worship although the songs often have a theme of worship. But to prove it was not worship we finish the event with applause giving our praise to the singers, **not to God.**

As we began this lesson I said, "Singing has the purpose to give spiritual encouragement and comfort to those who need it." Even this entertainment can do that!

Explanations for Beulah land and ether plains are found in the fine print at the lower left corner under the songs in the books but not on the projection screens. Do we know what these mean? *The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:19* said, “*Yet in the church I had rather speak 5 words with my understanding that I might instruct others, than 1000 words in a tongue.*” He could speak Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and who knows what else in his travels with the gift of tongues. He wanted to be sure in his communication.

Beulah (Isaiah 62:4) = Married (Married Land) A people married to God by covenant, that is why idolatry was called adultery. It also is referring to the land of Israel / Songs of Faith & Praise has “Poetic name for the Promised Land.” Ether Plains = ‘upper regions’  
Is it scriptural? Factual? Or thought simulating?

Some songs use the word Hosanna. In ‘Songs of Faith and Praise’ there is a song called Hosanna. It reads, “*Hosanna in the highest; Lord we lift of your name.*” Is this an exclamation of praise and glory to God? Is it a name of God? It was an appeal to God for deliverance. I couldn’t find it listed in a book on the names of God, but Vines Dictionary of Biblical Words says it is Hebrew for “save, we pray” An utterance of prayer! The word now seems to be an utterance of praise and even a name for God, and is in ‘The American College Dictionary’ as “*used in praise to God or Christ*” so it is more than a prayer though originally it was a cry for help. The people’s cry at the Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:9-15, Mk. 11; 9-10, & Jn. 12:13) was taken from Ps. 118:25 which was “*Save O Lord I pray.*” This was recited at the feast of the Tabernacles in response to the priest, accompanied by the waving of palm and willow branches. The last day of the feast was called “the great Hosanna” The boughs used were also called Hosannas. I not real sure how any of this history applies to us except maybe to the more modern change in the use of the word to express praise and to make it a name for God. But do we know what it means when we sing it? It is still in some of our dictionaries as a shout of praise as well as a prayer to save. It still is not listed as a name of God in those common dictionaries. But we sing it as a name of God. Current usage has changed from Bible usage and if we understand it that way all is well.

What about that song that uses the ditty “*Al la la le lu yah*” What can this be interpreted to be? Is the writer shuddering? The word Hallelujah or Alleluia means “Praise to God, or praise God. (The Lord or Jehovah)

When we “sing Hallelujah to the Lord” we are singing “Praise the Lord to the Lord; that is what we are saying. I didn’t find this in our book and I didn’t check whether this on the projection screens but I have seen it somewhere in recent years and I can’t sing it with the understanding. If you see this song somewhere think about it carefully.

We should try always to sing as the scripture designates, making melody in our hearts, singing with grace, and with understanding. The song “*His Grace reaches me*” is written for congregational singing. The base part in some books and I think the Paperless Songbook also has the base line as Ah- ah- ah. We should be singing words, not sound. Where is the understanding in the sound Ah –ah- ah- ah? I found no word spelled AH in my dictionaries. Base singers can use the lead line or the notes available on the base line but sing the words, not the noise of Ah- ah- ah- ah.

We should be doing things “decently and in order” in the worship assembly. Some of our songs are written as 2 or 4 songs being sung simultaneously, one over the other. Is this innovation a proper way to edify one another? (“Decently and in order”?) Some times used with Mary’s MAGNIFICAT – “My soul does magnify the Lord” Or a song of God’s Greatest Commands.

There is a group that provides entertainment and sells recordings and this group has a mission statement claiming a’cappella singing “to seek and save those which are lost.’ Some of their tunes “feature vocal percussion to firmly establish the rhythmic element.” They acknowledge “that not all audiences care for that particular style.” For over 20 years there have been groups using ‘this style’ in entertainment and it has helped to lead some to the actual use of instrumental percussion in their worship.

The group claims a cappella and vocal percussion in the same style. Is this a misnomer? A cappella means 'as done in church'. Which church? We know that singing is to be used in worship to teach, exhort, and admonish fellow Christians. (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16) It blesses us when we do it in the proper mental attitude of worship (1 Cor. 14:15) and it is vocal. (A cappella) as sung in church.

In the Lord's church historically, singing uses hymns in the order of poems, psalms, odes, responsive chants, etc. Justin refers to hymns associated with prayers. Eusebius suggests some responsive singing. Pliny was impressed with hymns and chants. Over time four-part harmony and various parts singing while other parts were silent became common. Singing style has changed but the Bible has not changed and singing was never authorized with instruments.

Vocal percussion does not fit the historical or Biblical pattern and needs to stay in the realm of entertainment.

PS: Just a thought while we are thinking on this! This performance was in a church 'activity building'. This brings us to a whole new line of thought. When a Melodeon was brought into a church annex it did lead to the use of mechanical instruments in worship. Would this lead to use of vocal percussion in the worship of the church because it was used in one of the buildings maintained by a group of Christians who are the Lord's church? It has in some congregations lately!

Our question was: WHAT IS NOT SINGING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING? I hope these thoughts today help to open our minds to what we are singing so we really can praise God and admonish and teach one another in song WITH THE UNDERSTANDING.

WHAT IS NOT SINGING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING?

**1 Corinthians 14:15 and reading thru verse 17.** *“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when you bless with the spirit, how shall he the occupier the room of the unlearned say Amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he does not understand what you say? For you truly give thanks, but the other is not edified.”*

We are to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. (How many times have we heard this?) We express this Spirit in the words of the songs. So, the words have to be the truth. If a song was true for the writer of the song, but it is not true for you, should you sing it anyway?

Not all songs are acceptable for worship. There are even some false teachings in songs. Unfortunately, the editors of our song books do not weed these out when printing a song book. We must think for ourselves; we cannot trust other people to provide proper songs for us when many of these writers are of different religious persuasions. The Bible is the Word of God. The song books are an aid to organized singing, and were written by people. There is some error in them. We should, as we sing, be sure the words are consistent with the scriptures. If we see something in the song we do not understand or we do not feel it in our heart, or is unscriptural, should we sing it anyway? We should not sing it, even if everyone else is singing it. Worship is an individual matter, but it is easy to get lost in group thinking.

If we are worshipping in truth, and we are truly worshipping God in Spirit in our singing then our singing will have feeling. A prayer will sound like a prayer and we will think in our minds “In Jesus name we pray” even when the writer has not placed it in the song. Praise and glory to God will be emphatic. We will sing what we feel in our heart.

We come across words in our songs like these: Beulah Land. Ether plains (There are some others that are not in our book but you are familiar with the words) night with Ebon Pinion – I dare not trust the sweetest frame –my anchor holds within the veil.

## TEACHING AND ADMONISHING

Singing is not a by-product or an entertainment in the Lord' Church but is a vital part of the evangelistic purpose for the church.

In **Colossians 3:16** as we have read each week for a while now *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* And in verse 17, *“Whatsoever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”*

Using good and pleasing music, many ideas, and a better understanding of God and His promises, and His expectations for us, have been implanted into fertile minds by song.

By the use of song, men have been able to move armies, establish kingdoms, and implant philosophies in the mind of hearers and the singers themselves. Singing definitely strengthens religious causes.

Many great doctrinal songs are sung in the church. They teach as we have already read in many of the scriptures which we have encountered in this study, the power of God, The wisdom and knowledge of God, the nature and worthiness of Jesus Christ God's Son.

Songs can teach of God's plan of salvation, the nature of the church, and the hope of the saved.

We are commanded to sing thoughts that can be understood by our hearers. Music that does not express intelligible thought is meaningless, useless. Certainly, singing must be beautiful, but it must also be understood.

If we “sing with the understanding, we will want it to be the truth. We are to worship in spirit and in truth. If we sing error, we teach error. We will look at some songs another time with a critical eye for error.

Songs are often repeated. Unless overdone this can be one of the best methods of teaching. The words associated with a good melody often stay in the mind causing us to recall the words.

Singing is not only worship it is also a good tool for teaching. This places a responsibility on the song leaders to select songs that will inspire others to sing with the spirit and the understanding.

Songs should bring thoughts to life! The lessons learned from the songs that we offer as praise to God have other applications in our lives. Alien sinners may be taught the facts concerning the death of Jesus Christ and how it relates to them by what we sing where ever we are.

Consider these words by **Carrie Breck - 1899** (“Nailed to the Cross.”) There was one who was willing to die in my stead, that a soul so unworthy might live; And the path to the cross He was willing to tread, all the sins of my life to forgive. He is tender and loving and patient with me , while He cleanses my heart of its dross, but “there’s no condemnation” I know I am free, for my sins are all nailed to the cross. I will cling to my Savior and never depart, I will joyfully journey each day, with a song on my lips and a song in my heart That my sins have been taken away. They are nailed to the cross! They are nailed to the cross! O how much He was willing to bear! With what anguish and loss, Jesus went to the cross! But He carried my sins with Him there.

Another important fact of Christianity is that the blood of Christ is the cleansing power and the only atonement for sins. (**Colossians 1:13-14; 1 John 1:7**) We sometimes sing songs that teach this. “There is power in the blood.”

Ponder the words of **William Cowper - 1771** “There is a fountain filled with blood.” We, of course contact the blood of Christ by being baptized into the death of Jesus. (**Romans 6:3-4**). Drawn from Immanuel’s veins; And sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains, Dear dying Lamb, your precious blood shall never lose its power, till all the ransomed

church of God be saved to sin no more. Ever since by faith I saw the steam  
Your flowing wounds supply, redeeming love has been my theme. And shall  
be until I die.

Many important facts about heaven are taught in songs. “How Beautiful  
Heaven must be?”

Singing these songs as well as many others like them should cause those  
who hear to appreciate heaven and want to go there.

Singing is also a means of encouragement for the newer members of the  
church. All Christians should encourage one another with songs like “Stand  
up, stand up for Jesus, which has great power.

Selecting songs that are appropriate and fitting for every occasion is  
useful and sometimes critical. Most of us have heard the story about the song  
leader who led “Ready to suffer” just before the sermon.” It not likely to  
happen here, it is not in our book!

Songs can encourage non-Christians to obey the gospel. Invitation songs  
encourage sinners to accept Christ thru obedience to the gospel and to be  
prepared to meet God in peace.

Singing is a good way to remind us about the importance of prayer.  
#800. (*Songs of Faith & Praise*.) “What a friend we have in Jesus.”

How often do we think of prayer as a duty rather than a privilege and an  
opportunity? **W.W. Walford (1845)** tells us that it can be a “Sweet Hour of  
Prayer.” A Christian realizes his dependence on God and can sing such songs  
with the spirit and the understanding.

Bereaved and grieving families are comforted by songs. Millie and I had  
been involved in funeral singing groups for over 20 years and I’ll never forget  
those songs, songs of which were used often for this purpose. One of them is  
“Does Jesus care when my heart is pained.” “Oh yes, He cares.”

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“Does Jesus care when my heart is pained.” “Oh yes, He cares.”

Singing is also a way of praising God for His goodness and the blessing we enjoy from Him. “We praise thee Oh God.” “for the Son of your love. For Jesus who died and is now gone above...”  
“Hallelujah” means “Praise the Lord”

WHEN WE CONSIDER WHY Jesus came to earth, we can sing “WHY DID MY SAVIOR COME TO EARTH, and the humble go. Why did He choose a lowly birth? J.G Dailey asked these questions in the year 1892, and then provided an answer. “ Because He loved me so.

THERE IS NO POWER IN ANY MAN-MADE INSTRUMENT THAT IS INHERENT IN THE INSTRUMENT THAT God HAS AUTHORIZED US TO USE IN WORSHIP. ---THE HUMAN HEART ---. Singing is the only music authorized by God in the New Testament and singing is wonderful when it is done as He has taught us --- from heart full of devotion to Him.

God has put an instrument in most of us! The vocal cords we use are just like any instrument one could play. They should be trained, used, and cared for.

When we have joy, when we feel the need to move closer to God When we are in deep sorrow or despair, and we make an effort to find God, songs are most useful.

Think of **Miriam** after the crossing of the Reed Sea.

**Deborah** as she realizes how God has destroyed the 900 chariots of those who would harm them.

**Solomon** has he stood on the steps to the beautiful temple erected for the worship of God.

Each would sing a new song of thanksgiving and praise.

**Paul and Silas** in prison singing of the goodness of God and rejoicing their salvation and that they might be found worthy to suffer on His behalf.

All of these instances would teach and admonish others. We also have many opportunities to instruct those about us. All can sing, women and

children can participate in singing; it is not only the men who can teach in singing, but all can do it together. Teaching the word and offering praise to His name. Many a burden has been lifted, many a heart has been made lighter because of the song of someone near or someone they know. It can bring great comfort when we sing about the promises of God. Our young people can establish and strengthen their faith and inspire them to stay close to God because of the song they sing. The song will go where ever they go.

There is a story about a soldier who lay dyeing on the battle field in the great battle at Shiloh in the War Between the States. The Chaplain knelt by his side and said, "Son, is there anything I can do to help?" "The dying soldier said: "Yes, would you can take the wallet out of my pocket and send it to my wife." The Chaplain replied; "Yes, surly will" And then he asked if there was anything else, he could do. The dying soldier said, "Yes, I want you to lead me in a song I learned at my mother knee." The Chaplain inquired the name of the song and began to sing, "**How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for you in his excellent word.**"

And as the song faded into the thin night air, the soldier was ushered into eternity. This song, learned early in life, sustained and helped him as he came to the time of is death.

It is a wonderful thing to know the great hymns of the church and to be able to sing them in times of joy or sadness. In times of great grief or sadness and times of rejoicing there will be a song on your heart that will fit the occasion. Thank God for those singing around you in years past who taught these songs to you and admonished you in song to be faithful until that time when we will be ushered into eternity.

Sorrow and sadness can inspire about as many songs as does joy and gladness.

Joseph Scriven who wrote a poem for his mother was a man who experienced the friendship of Christ during a life of trouble. As a young man in Ireland, about 1840, his intended bride was accidentally drowned the

evening before their wedding. He had been training as a military cadet, but poor health forced him to abandon his dreams of a career in this field.

He moved to Canada and became a servant of those who were physically handicapped and financially destitute. Tragedy continued and once again the plans for a wedding were cut short when his 2<sup>nd</sup> fiancée died following a brief illness.

Joseph was destined to go thru life alone, knowing the friendship of Jesus Christ. The letter to his mother contained the poem, "*What a Friend we Have in Jesus*" written in 1855 was finally published as a song in 1868 by Charles C. Converse

It has often occurred that after heartbreak or the loss of love ones, songs have been written. Some of those did not make it into our book but who has not heard the story of Horatio Spafford who wrote, "*It is Well With my Soul*" after the ship he was traveling on to England passed over the area where on a previous trip his children were lost in a ship wreck.

When doubt and despair gave way to hope and faith 22-year-old Ray Palmer in 1830 recorded his spiritual biography in 4 stanzas of "*My Faith Looks up to Thee.*"

And there were those who were blind like **Fanny Crosby** who wrote songs all of her adult life, and **George Matheson** who struggled with blindness and preached from memory after he could barely see, then wrote in 1842 "*O Love That Will Not Let Me Go.*" His words ... "I rest my weary soul in thee..."

And Elizabeth Payson Prentiss; grief stricken when her children died in an epidemic in New York City in 1856, prayed her way thru from the darkness of despair to the light of Christ and left us with this lovely song "*More Love to Thee Oh Christ.*"

Songs honoring Christ and providing us with the assurance that God is with us in joy or sorrow are a great blessing if ... we just remember to turn to God and not away from God in those times.

## CRITICISM OF SONG WORDING

A metaphor is a figure of speech where a term or a phrase is applied to something which is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance as in the song, "*A mighty Fortress is our God.*" (#10) God is not a physical fort, but does protect His own!

Sometimes there may be a mixed metaphor. This is a figurative expression where 2 or more metaphors are used in combination. (Song of Solomon 5:15, "*His legs are like alabaster columns set on bases of gold.*" Would we take it literally? )

The Bible language uses metaphors never intended to be taken a literal. As few examples are:

1. Jesus is the door of the sheep. John 14:7
2. We are to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" Matthew 5:6
3. The armor listed in Ephesians 6: 13-18 is metaphorical.

Poets do this in writing songs or a poem which may later be put to music as a song.

Metaphoric communication can be beautiful, until our minds decide to take it literally.

This has been a communication problem many times with the wording of the Lord's Supper. Even Martin Luther and Huldych Zwingli as reformers understood the words: "This is my body" differently. Luther took it literally as the Catholic Church did while Zwingli understood it metaphorically as representing the body, not as the actual body of Christ.

Some terms have both a literal and metaphoric meaning. Walking in an age old metaphoric. It goes back to a time before cars and public transportation and if you wanted to go somewhere you would have to walk and ride a mule or a camel.

It goes back before the flood when Enoch walked with God. This indicates the type of life Enoch lived, not that he always walked around where God walked. (Genesis 5:22)

After Jesus spoke of being the bread of life, many of His disciples walked with him more. They had been literally walking with Him and now they would not longer follow or walk with Him.

God prepared in advance that a Christian should “walk in good works/” (Ephesians 2:10)

And a metaphor which has been misunderstood recently in some congregations we have attended is the Biblical metaphor of Standing. ‘Stand’ is used in song and is a Biblical metaphor for adhering to a belief and a course of behavior.

1. The Christian Soldier is told to ‘stand. (Ephesians 6:13-14.)
2. There is the grace in which we ‘stand’. (Romans 5:2)
3. We stand in jeopardy. (1 Corinthians 15:50.)
4. We are to ‘stand’ against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11)
5. Stand fast in the Lord. (Philippians 4:1 & 1 Thessalonians 3:8)

In our songs we are:

1. Standing on the promises of God. (# 452)
2. We stand in awe of Him. (#96)
3. We “Standup for Jesus.” (# 648)
4. And we ask some one to “Stand by me” (# 971) and we have to assume that we are asking God to "Stand by me" although the song never mentions God and any other entity to do the standing.

When a person sings about standing, if we are to sing with the understanding we need to distinguish if it is literal or metaphorical. We have been in church assemblies which sang while we were seated but the song director asked that we stand when singing a song where the words stand up and, or standing was a part of the song. One such song was (# 96) “I stand in awe of Him” and it has been popular for some to sit until they get to the phase, “I stand in awe” I did stand with everyone else that 1<sup>st</sup> time but I have not done it since.

My reaction was that despite the director's knowledge and skill in the mechanics of music, he was taking a metaphor and applying it literally, & did not understand what he was singing. Of course, only the author of a song like this would know what he had in mind when writing this verse.

The Bible uses the phrase "Stand in Awe:

1. 3 times in KJV. (Psalm 4:4, 33:8, 119:161)
2. Twice in NKJV. (Psalm 33:8, 119:161)
3. 9 times in Revised Standard Version. (Joshua 4:14, 1 Samuel 18:15, 1 Kings 3:28, Ps 22;23, 33:8, & 119:161, Ecclesiastes 3:14, Malachi 2:5; Romans 11:20)
4. 4 times in N.I.V. (Ecclesiastes 5:7, Isaiah 29:33, Habakkuk 3:2, & Malachi 2:5)

The phrase is metaphorical in every case.

I would never object to standing while singing, but I do feel rather foolish when everyone jumps up in the middle of a verse of song making literal what was never intended to be literal. (I have never experienced it at Florence Blvd, but trends have a way of creeping in, and if our elders lose their perspective or we have a change of eldership, strange, and sometimes interesting but unscriptural things, begin to happen.)

So, it can be expected that hymn writers will use biblical metaphors in their poems and compositions. Almost all songs are poetical, although some songs are just a phrase repeated over and over, ad nauseam

So, we sing in metaphors often. "We walk in sunlight" (# 611) while sitting in pews.

"When we walk with the lord in the Light of His Word" (#915)  
or ask for

"Just a Closer Walk" with Him, (# 406) we do it all without moving our feet.

We have sung about throwing out a life line without ever feeling the need to throw out any literal line. (# 633) Song numbers are from "Songs of Faith & Praise.

How many of you have “marched to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion”? (#869) I have had the opportunity to go up to Mount Zion even visiting the tomb of David but I don't think any in our group even mentioned that we had an opportunity to be literally ‘marching’ up to Zion. We were walking slowly as I recall it. Dragging our tails as the metaphor goes.

We are to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. (How many times have we heard this?) We express this Spirit in the words of the songs. So, the words have to be the truth. If a song was true for the writer of the song, but it is not true for you, should you sing it anyway? I have asked this question before, haven't I?

Not all songs are acceptable for worship. There are even some false teachings in songs. I have said this before also. It is unfortunate the editors of our song books do not weed these out when printing a song book. We must think for ourselves; we cannot trust other people to provide proper songs for us when many of these writers are of different religious persuasions. The Bible is the Word of God. The song books are an aid to organized singing, and were written by people. There is some error in them. We should, as we sing, be sure the words are consistent with the scriptures. If we see something in the song we do not understand or we do not feel it in our heart, or is unscriptural Should we sing it anyway? We should not sing it, even if everyone else is singing it. Worship is an individual matter, but it is easy to get lost in group thinking.

Do we really mean what we sing? I have had the opportunity to worship and sing in 27 states and 4 countries; and in about 200 different congregations in my lifetime so far, and I hope to have the opportunity to visit some more before I leave this earth. I can only recall 2 congregations where obvious attention was paid to the content of the songs. One was a black congregation in Louisville and the other was at the Madison, TN. church when Ray Walker was the song leader. Here it was explained what the song was, a prayer, praise, exhortation, invitation, etc.

Verses with doctrinal errors were sometimes pointed out and always avoided. Words with little known meaning were explained or the verse or song was not used. Let's look at some songs and see what some of the words that we sing are.

**#416 “Footprints of Jesus.”** Verse 3 –Speaking of the footprints of Jesus, *“If they lead thru the temple holy.”* *“The temple holy”* is your body, not a building somewhere; *“or in homes of the poor and lowly, serving the Lord.”* Really? This is what Mary Slade wrote in 1871 and she probably did this. Do I? Fortunately, the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse of a 4-verse song is skipped anyway.

**# 108 “The Lord is in His Holy Temple”** can be very misleading especially to some one visiting or having a denominational background. Often the song is used there to call the assembly to order. In those traditions the church building has an equivalent to a temple and may even be called a temple. The auditorium where the church assemblies gather is thought of as a Sanctuary or Holy Place, and may even have an altar. The song in our book reads in the lower left-hand corner under the song that the scripture for it comes from Habakkuk 2:20. This is from an Old Testament book written between 621 and 604 Before Christ.’

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:16, Paul wrote that we are the temple of the living God. It reads, *“For you are the temple of God, as God has said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”* And then in verse 19 *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who was in you whom you have from God and you are not your own.”*

The words are still accurate as written but not as perceived. The Lord is still in His Holy Temple and still reigns in heaven, but the location of the temple has changed from the physical building and locations of the tabernacle or the temple in the Old Testament times to the New Testament dwelling place in the heart of his people; His faithful saints. As this song is led in our assemblies it would be good to note this before the song is sung at least occasionally.

**Could we sing # 662 “I Surrender All?” Include verse 1 & 2.**

Judson Van De Venter said he would surrender all in 1896.

Verse 1 - “All to Him I freely give” verse 2 – “*Worldly pleasures all forsaken*”  
Look into your life. Is this true for you? All? Forsaken?

These songs have some very strong thoughts and can definitely lead to greater service to Christ if we understand the words we sing and do them.

We will not always have a complete understanding of the words, but we will surmise their meaning and the general thought.

Is it scriptural? Factual? Or thought simulating?

Is it scriptural? In the song “*O why not tonight.*” # 939 - Verse 5 - “*Believe, obey, the work is done, be saved O tonight.*” Here we must have an assumption that “obey” includes repentance, confession, and baptism and fruitful living for salvation to take place. This would be acceptable right after an invitation where all this was explained but could be very misleading to a person not already trained in Bible salvation.

# 738– *Take the name of Jesus with you.*” Verse 4. “*King of Kings in Heaven we will crown Him.*” Maybe true but He is King already. He does not need us to crown Him. We have already acknowledged Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

# 387– “*Tell me the story of Jesus*” but tell me correctly. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> line of verse 1 the angels sang. (Actually, according to Luke, the writer of this Gospel, they spoke in unison; Luke said they were saying, not singing.) Many songs popular at Christmas have this same idea. “*Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*” (# 1001) It can be concluded that when you are singing you are also saying. As Ephesians 5:19 says “Speaking to yourselves in psalm, hymns, and spiritual songs.” Is this nit-picking or do we really need to know what we sing is true?

# 699 – “*I’ll be a Friend to Jesus.*” Chorus – “*until my years shall end*” does this mean I won’t be His friend after I die?

# 943 – “*Do You Know My Jesus?*” Chorus – “*He will abide ‘til the end.*” How about singing “*without end?*” If Jesus has an end what hope is there for us? Watch this word until or ‘till.

# 122 – “*The Love of God.*” In the chorus, “*The love of God will never lose its glory*” ‘*til we see Him face to face*’. It will never lose its glory ‘and’ we will see Him face to face. Is seeing us really going to be so bad that God could lose His glory? Always watch that word “until”. Laurene Highfield did not watch that word in 1916 when she wrote these words.

.Austin Miles went to a garden alone “*while the dew was still on the roses*”. Or did he? He heard a voice. # 595. Or did he? Caution here. God speaks thru His word, which may be recalled to mind as we walk in the garden. No new word from God, by voice or words that “*none other has ever heard.*” It is a beautiful and popular song though, and can be thought provoking. BUT THIS IS A CASE WHERE IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO KNOW WHAT THE WRITER IS EXPRESSING. HIS WORDS ARE IDEAS FROM John 20; 14-18 AND HE IS WRITING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE THAT MARY HAD ON THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION WHEN SHE WAS IN THE GARDEN ALONE AND SAW JESUS ALIVE, SHE WENT BACK TO THE DISCIPLES AND SAID I HAVE SEEN THE LORD. IF WE LEAD THIS SONG, WE SHOULD BE SURE TO EXPLAIN WHAT IT IS ABOUT FROM TIME TO TIME. Some song books have left this one out, but not ours.

Ira Stanphill back in 1949 wrote a beautiful song called “*Mansion over the hilltop*”. It’s # 881. In verse 1 he says he wants “*a gold one that’s silver lined*” A bit presumptuous isn’t it? I have to go numb while this is being sung. I change verse 2 from “I want” to “I got a mansion” He also has an assumption of streets of gold while the Bible only mentions one street in that city.

*“I’ll live in Glory” Verse 1 of # 895. “I’d like to stay here longer than man’s appointed days.”* You can, I don’t want to. Line 2 of verse 1. *“If my Savior calls me”* should be *“When my Savior calls me”, not if.*

Charles Wesley in 1740 wrote, *“O for a thousand tongues to sing.”* It was verse 4 as he wrote it. (It is verse 4 in ‘Songs of Faith and Praise’ # 233.) *“He breaks the power of cancelled sin”* Cancelled sin has no power anyway once it has been cancelled, why would He want to break it again? Could change that maybe to *“reigning sin”*. Again verse 3 & 4 usually omitted anyway.

Do we understand what we have been singing? Do we put any feeling into the thought? Do we put expression into the words? When you sing # 76 *“How Great Thou Art;”* Are we singing it habitually, and without expression? *“And when I think of God His son not sparing, He bled and died to take away my sin”* does it bring a tear to my eye? Did I feel any twinge in my gut?

We should try always to sing as the scripture designates, making melody in our hearts, singing with grace, and with understanding.

Some songs use the word Hosanna. In ‘Songs of Faith and Praise’ # 167 there is a song called Hosanna. It reads, *“Hosanna in the highest; Lord we lift of your name.”* Is this an exclamation of praise and glory to God? Is it a name of God? I couldn’t find it listed in a book on the names of God, but Vines Dictionary of Biblical Words says it is Hebrew for “save, we pray” An utterance of prayer! The word now seems to be an utterance of praise and even a name for God, more than a prayer though originally it was a cry for help. The people’s cry at the Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:9-15, Mk. 11; 9-10, & Jn. 12:13) was taken from Ps. 118:25 which was *“Save O Lord I pray.”* This was recited at the feast of the Tabernacles in response to the priest, accompanied by the waving of palm and willow branches. The last day of the feast was called “the great Hosanna” The boughs used were also called Hosannas.

I not real sure how any of this history applies to us except maybe to the more modern change in the use of the word to express praise and to make it a name for God.

But what does it mean and why do we sing it? It is now in our dictionaries as a shout of praise as well as a pray to save. It still is not listed as a name of God. But, it seems, we sing it as one.

**SONG # 770 “Dear Lord & Father of Mankind.** Did you see the amen written at the end of the song? Is that amen without asking thru Jesus name a proper way to pray? We were just asking for forgiveness.

LET’S TRY TO SING TO PLEASE GOD EVERY TIME WE SING and SING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING.

Jake Van Dyke 2014

## SING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING

WHAT TYPE OF SONGS CAN WE SING?

In **Colossians 3:16** we read “*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” And in verse 17, “*Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*”*

And in **Ephesians 5:19** “*Speaking (or addressing) one another in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

These are the only two places in the New Testament where we find general categories of songs to be sung and they are called **psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs,**

**Psalms.** What are psalms? A psalm is a sacred or solemn song sometimes also called a hymn many of which are derived from the 150 songs, hymns and prayers which together form the Old Testament book called Psalms. In some Old Testament times, and since David, they were sung to the sound of a harp or an instrument with the plucking of strings.

While God permitted this invention of David in worship in the temple area it was also being used improperly by the time of the prophet Amos. This was around 760 B.C.

Amos in chapter 5 found it necessary to tell that generation to hear the Word of the Lord. It was God’s call for repentance for those who were not living right. God had begun to despise even their worship which was insincere and not a practice in the daily dealings.

We have in the racks built onto the back of our pews in this place of assembly song books as an aid to our singing and for our selection or choice of songs to be used that we may all participate, and that we may better understand the words that we are singing. We also have some other songs available which are not included in this book but can be projected on the screen so all can have access to the words and the music written for those words.

The book that we currently use is named “*Songs of Faith and praise*” It was compiled and edited by Alton H. Howard and published by his Publishing Company.

Beginning on page 1048 in the back of book is a list of the songs in the book categorized by topic. Let’s look at this list and when we look at types of songs we sing may it help us to “*Sing with the understanding.*”

***Types of songs:***

1. Adoration and praise to God or to our Savior Jesus Christ.
2. Songs of assurance for the Christian, God’s protection, His Promises & existence
3. Songs to recognize God’s atonement when He sent Jesus to make amends for our guilt.
4. And To think about baptism and our baptism into Christ (O Happy Day)
5. Songs of benediction, to leave a blessing on others as we go our separate ways.
6. To recall the Savior’s blood sacrificed for us, & for our salvation.
7. Songs as a call to worship & praise.
8. Songs to teach children of God, His power, and blessings.
9. Songs of comfort for those in distress
10. Songs of commitment to the cause of Christ & to follow Him  
\* yield to Him.
11. Other songs to be used to prepare us for the Lord’ Table and to think about the cross

12. Songs for Confession,
13. Consecration,
14. Courage.
15. Dedication, devotion, & stewardship to Christ
16. For encouragement. Teaching and admonishing, (for others and ourselves)
17. About eternal life and heaven,
18. Missions and evangelism,
19. Faith & evangelism to the faith.
20. Family, sharing & the love for the family of God.
21. Fellowship and the bond of love in God's family
22. Forgiveness, seeking and praising God for it.
23. Songs which are used well in a funeral setting or too aid the grieving.
24. Songs to glorify the name of God.
25. Songs which express our appreciation for the grace of God to us. (Amazing Grace)
26. Songs for guidance in the journey of life.
27. For healing, or body and soul
28. Songs about the holiness of God and about His Spirit.
29. Songs that give us hope or that express our hope for the future with God.
30. Songs to honor the name of Jesus.
31. Songs that speak of the love of God and of Jesus Christ
32. And God's might, His power, and majesty
33. We sing about nature that God has so beautifully created.
34. We sing to declare our obedience to God.
35. There are some patriotic songs and songs we sing on special occasions.
36. We think about the promises of God,
37. His protection,
38. Remembering the resurrection of Christ
39. We sing that there may be revival, personal, national, or worldwide.
40. For salvation of ourselves and others

41. In Thanksgiving and prayer.
42. About trusting God,
43. About unity, and victory in Jesus and our faith in that victory.
44. And also, for aid in the Christian warfare against the powers of evil.

These are the things that we sing about and are the causes of the melody in our hearts, which is expressed from the lips.

In our song books, up in the right-hand corner of the page, these topics are shown. We do not get this when using the screen.

These spiritual songs would have to be acceptable for worship.

Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is worship as the expression of the inner spirit (in our hearts) as man to God our creator. God is Spirit and desires and even as Jesus we must worship in spirit and in truth. Singing must be from the heart, the emotion part of mankind. The melody, however it sounds to us, must 1<sup>st</sup> be generated by the melody of the heart.

Singing then, must be from the spirit. No one else can worship for you. Worship is individual and should not be affected by what those around you are doing. If they are sorry singers or nightingales is irrelevant to what melody comes from your heart. Remember Paul said that worship must be with the spirit and the understanding in 1 Corinthians 14:15

Singing must be from the mind, the rational part of you. Without the involvement of the mind, thinking and understanding what you are singing, the singing is nothing more than vibrations in the air; it is not worship!

Singing must be to the Lord. It is not a mere performance before an audience to please people around you.

These attitudes of worship apply to everyone, everywhere, and in all circumstances. They are not limited to a special day, and a certain time of that day, or in a special building. Praises to God can be sung anytime, anywhere, as in prison with Paul and Silas or as Zachariah in the births of John or as Mary who sang when she was to bring Jesus, God's Son into the world.

The Old Testament book of Psalms from which many of our songs derive contains psalms that express joy and sorrow, trouble and trials, thanksgiving and lament, and a variety of other thoughts and emotions.

In addition to attitudes necessary to the worship of God in song, the singing is also for edification of others in the assembly. As each person who prays in the assembly does it speaking to God it is also for the benefit of those who hear it in the assembly. So it is, and must be with the singing.

Singing also has the purpose to give spiritual encouragement and comfort to those who it.

There is no pattern in the scriptures for topics of singing because the Bible is silent about this.

Sometimes the person or persons designated to lead the congregation in song will select a topic a theme of the service of worship. One example may be the theme of prayer. This may be selected before a prayer with one or two songs, or may be the theme of the entire assembly that day.

Let's look a few of the songs that may be selected for this. Our book has an entire section for the selection of songs on prayer. From # 761 thru # 849.

Let's look at # 840, "I WILL PRAY". Written by A. Cummings in 1875. The song has been around awhile. It is not a prayer. It is only stating that in the personal life of this author the statements made show a desire and commitment that prayer will be said in the morning, at noontime, and in the evening to God.

It can be nicely used to introduce the song service but it really needs only the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> verses to accomplish what is being said. The question in the minds of the singers might be whether it would really be our personal plan and desire to pray in the morning, noontime and in the evening, to God. Do we sing this song with the understanding that we would make this same commitment, or did we think it was some kind of a prayer in itself?

Now let's look at # 770, "DEAR LORD AND FATHER OF MANKIND". Written by John G. Whittier.

This song is written to be a prayer! It is sung a little slower than some songs in a medium tempo. The content of this song is the author's prayer and it can be our prayer. In this song we ask for forgiveness of our sins and for a stronger faith. Then we ask for God's blessings of peace, the beauty of God's peace. The 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza should be omitted, not because it is traditional to omit the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza of 4 stanza songs, but because it is not a part in any way of the prayer. Although sometimes our minds do wander off on tangent thought in the middle of a prayer.

Now look at # 671, "PURER IN HEART, O GOD" written by Fannie C. Davison in 1877.

This is a prayer from start to finish and to be a prayer it should be followed by a thought, either as a part of the song or mental in our minds, that it is a prayer in Jesus name. No prayer can be offered to God without going thru our advocate Jesus Christ. This song is sung slowly and thoughtfully and it would be good if all 3 stanzas which are a part of the prayer would be sung as one prayer. What is being prayed is, as the editor of this book has put up in the right-hand corner of the page, "CONSECRATION AND DEVOTION."

I was looking at # 226 in Alton Howard's book "Song of Faith and Praise and something confusing there. The song was written by Robert Robinson in 1758 and the music came from John Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music and the tune is called NETTLETON written by A. Nettleton.

We mostly know this song as the one where we raise our Ebenezer which is explained in the fine print below the song as “Stone of help” We are grateful that they put that note there or we would never remember that from time to time when we sing this song. That second verse should probably be omitted anyway, not because of the ‘stone of hope word’, but because it does not fit with the theme of thanksgiving for the goodness of God and the request that God never allow us to leave him.

What I am confused about is that without any note of revision or editing this song in our book either has misprints or editing without credits as to who did it.

In the original song which I have checked against 6 other songbooks which have been used by our brotherhood in the past all are the same except one left the second verse out as it should be.

The verse in our book reads;

“Come thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;  
Praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it, Mount of thy redeeming love”.

The original song reads, as see if you will notice the difference?

“O thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me ever to adore thee, May I still thy goodness prove,  
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for thy courts above.

Like I said , I am confused. The title and the 1<sup>st</sup> word have changed from a word calling on the fount of blessing to a word asking the fount to come.

Why ? But then the 3<sup>rd</sup> line changes to some melodious sonnet sung by flaming tongue. Where did that come from?

And the last line says “Praise the mount. Mount of thy redeeming love. “  
How did a fount (fountain) change to a Mount, (mountain)?

This change of wording does not fit with the theme of thanksgiving for the goodness of God and the request that God never allow us to leave him either. .

I was looking for a few of the songs that may be selected that demonstrated a topic; the topic of prayer. This song with the wording change seems to have taken me completely off course and left me confused. Maybe some of you can study this song and what it means and why it would be changed from the original and sometime later explain it to me.

I began by talking about types of songs that were suitable for worship and were psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs. And of course, there are many other types of songs in the music world. To think of a few types. Rock and roll, jazz, waltz, contemporary, blues, country, classical, boogie woogie, rag time, and some others that do not come to mind right now. Very few of these types would fit the criteria for worship.

Contemporary just means songs of the current time. All the songs were once the songs of their current time. Contemporary worship music today often uses words that are simple and repeated often and some are very difficult to sing, but some of the very old songs are also hard to sing and many are not used any more because of that.

Every thing in worship music revolves around the words . This is the 1<sup>st</sup> thing that should be looked at in a new song. The song must be Biblically sound. It should teach something, help us to worship, encourage brothers and sisters and not confuse us with ideas that are not true.

Some classical tunes have been used well with our songs. We have Ludwig Von Beethoven whose music, # 202 in our book, fits well with Henry Van Dyke's "Joyful, Joyful We Adore you" (I had to mention Henry some where.)

Overall, with a book of around 1000 songs of various types and various worship themes we have a few more available than the 1<sup>st</sup> century church may have had . It is not how many songs we have that is important but how we apply them in our individual and corporate worship. Thank God for those many persons who were able to write these songs and for those who could put the music to them to aid us in our worship to the one true and Holy God that we serve.

## THE QUESTION OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Whenever the subject of singing is spoken of, the history of the religious organizations which call themselves Christian will enter into the discussion.

The age-old question that never should have been asked will be asked again! That question will be asked in various forms;

1. Why can't we use an instrument to aid us in singing? It is never off key.
2. Where does the New Testament prohibit the use of mechanical instruments with singing in our worship?
3. Does the Greek word "psalmos" mean to sing with musical accompaniment or does it mean without it?
4. Why not praise God with harps, stringed instruments, and organs? David did!
5. Didn't God say, "*I am the same, yesterday, today, and forever?*"
6. The church was never told to stop using it, why should we?
7. Does a little thing like instrumental music in worship really make any difference?
8. What is an aid to worship and what is an addition?

We should review the issues from time to time.

Young people are not mature in the faith and often enjoy entertainment in the churches just as they do in their daily lives.

Why are magazines, books, and videos on entertainment, made in the secular world selling so well to the younger people, even to those raised in churches where mechanical instruments of music are not used? ... Yet?

**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5: 8** still reads like it did when it was written 1900 and some years ago, "**Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary, the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.**"

The issues of yesterday are still the issues of today and the powers of evil still dress up the issues with flowery words and enticing ideas. Satan asked Eve in the Garden of Eden, "***Has God indeed said 'You shall not eat of every tree of the Garden'?***" Today his question is similar. 'Has God indeed said '***You shall not use instruments in worship?***' That fruit Eve ate tasted so good so she gave some to Adam. The people that enjoy music with instruments leading them are offering it to us because it sounds and feels so good to them.

I did come from one of those religious organizations which used organs and pianos regularly in their worship assemblies. These were people who were called Protestants but had long since forgotten what they were protesting. When they began their protest against the organization and practices ruled by the Pope, they were called Reformed. The Reformed Churches did not begin using mechanical instruments in worship. I would have to look up their history again but as I recall the instruments were not used until about the 1850's. This was also the same period of time that this problem came up in the Lord's churches.

Isn't it interesting that the apostasies generated in other religious organizations calling themselves Christian are soon followed by the same issues in the Lord's church? It is the world changing, not the New Testament yet changes that occur in the world are followed by changes in the church.

When we were introduced to churches of Christ for the 1<sup>st</sup> time Millie and I were surprised, maybe, by the worship without instruments but after reading a few tracts they had on the wall about the church it was never an issue with us. I really don't know why it should be an issue at all, but it is and I think a review of those 8 questions I listed earlier may be useful. I want to look at them in reverse order of what I listed.

Question 8. What is an aid to worship and what is an addition?

To look quickly at this question, we will look at a **chart made by Mid McKnight** back in maybe the 1950's.

What is vocal? What is instrumental?

What aids were used by Noah to build the ark?

What did the priests need to sacrifice a Passover lamb?

What aids do we need to understand what we are singing? To get everyone in the same pitch?

Question 7. Does a little thing like instrumental music in worship really make any difference?

We will not have to look at this very long! We can answer this with another question. "Does a little thing like a fruit plucked from a tree, and eaten, which God did not authorize make a difference? It made a big difference to Adam and Eve and to Jesus Christ who eventually paid for that sin and ours.

Question 6. The church was never told to stop using instruments, why should we?

The obvious answer is, "*The instrument was never used in the church so why would they be told to stop using them?*"

That would be the same as telling the church to stop baptizing babies. The church never did baptize babies. It was those apostate religious organizations that started those things for themselves. The scripture has never changed so the church cannot.

Question 5. Didn't God say, "*I am the same, yesterday, today, and forever?*"

Answer: Regarding the use of instrument in worship which was mentioned at least 7 places in the Psalms, and used by the prophets in 1 Samuel 10:5, David used it to calm the evil spirits in King Saul, and they were called a good thing in Psalm 92:1-5. They were even called instruments of God in 1 Chronicles 16:42 & 2 Chronicles 7:6. Elders and angels use them in heaven (Revelation 5:8) and it would be reasonable to think that we can use them in the church today, but...while it is true as Hebrews 13:8 reads, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,*" and Jesus Christ is God's image, it is true of God. Though God is unchangeable does not mean that God's laws have always been the same.

We know that there have been differing laws approved by God. His 1<sup>st</sup> law was made to Adam and Eve before the incident in which they broke that law.

God then established a law of sacrifice in which Cain & Abel participated and was given to and passed down by the patriarchs, the fathers in the families.

Next after the Exodus from Egypt and at Mount Sinai God gave a new and expanded law to Moses and the people of Israel designed to maintain the family of Abraham and God's promises to him until the Savior would come. The law was sealed as a covenant, and the sign of its participants was circumcision of all males.

After the promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin there was what Galatians 6: 2 calls the Law of Christ.

The law of Christ no longer required sacrifice of animals as Jesus Christ was the final sacrifice for sin "once for all". The priesthood was changed, (Hebrews 7:12) Circumcision was no longer required because its purpose had been completed and now, in Christ, Gentiles were invited into the Lord's body, His church. Incense was nowhere authorized, as now the prayers of the saints were to be the "sweet savor unto God."

And neither the Father, Son, nor Holy Spirit authorized the use of instrumental music in the worship of the Lord's church as were used in the Old Covenant times, and God's laws to that people of the descendants of Israel. (Jacob) had served their purpose.

God has not changed but His covenant with His people had to change.

Question 4. Why not praise God with harps, stringed instruments, and organs? David did!

Answers: Many members of the Lord's church enjoy instrumental music and it can bring great pleasure. Some very accomplished musicians and some who have written the songs we sing can play and enjoy their instruments in their work or in their home.

Many members of the Lord's church are excellent cooks and we all enjoy good meals of rich foods. But... we cannot make this a part of the Lord's Table at the church assemblies because very simply, Jesus asked His disciples to remember Him with the bread and the wine. What has been authorized then is the loaf, and the fruit of the vine, as it is called.

A man is the head of his home and he can do whatever is morally right in his home, if he can afford it. But Christ is the Head of His church and He decided what should be in it! The tastes or preferences of man was not consulted by "Him who works all things after *"the counsel of His own will,"*

The absence of harps, stringed instruments, & organs in our worship assemblies is not a matter of taste, culture, refinement, education, or financial ability. Christ, our example and Head of His church said, *"Not my will, but thine (God's) be done."*

As testified in **Galatians 5:3** in the matter of circumcision, ***"To every man who becomes circumcised is a debtor to keep the whole law."*** Seeking justification of anything from the Old Law, the Former Covenant – causes people to fall from grace. **Galatians 5: 4** continuing the passage from verse 3, ***"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace."***

Mechanical instruments, as harps and organs, are excluded then and were never introduced into the Lord's church by any command of God as the church concentrated on pleasing God and worshipped God in a way acceptable to Him. It is to please God and not men. Paul said in **Galatians 1: 10**, *"If I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ."*

**Remembering John 4:24** *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."*

Question 3. Does the Greek word "psalmos" mean to sing with musical accompaniment or does it mean without it?

Answer. Why is it, a lot of people who know that foreign languages are "Greek to them" get involved in questioning all the translations by those who know what it means? I will use excerpts from an article I have in my archives that was published in the Gospel Advocate in the December 25, 1969 issue and written by Guy N. Woods as he interviewed people who know what the Greek words mean.

The article refers to a letter received by Brother Woods from a brother who asked a question seeking to sustain the view that the instrument (mechanical) infers in the word 'Psallo' translated 'make melody' in Ephesians 5:19, and attempts to refute our assertion that the Greeks, who surely know the significance of one of their common verbs, do not use instruments in their worship.

We were in Cana of Galilee on a Sunday morning as the church bells were ringing in the worshippers. As we entered the building there was a man in a recessed opening in the wall chanting continuously in a sound that resembled wailing. There were no instruments of music in the building.

Back to brother Woods and his inquisition of some Greeks. He next contacted by letter a 'Pastor' of one of the largest Greek Orthodox Churches in the South. Asking:

"Does the Greek word psallo, as currently used by Greek speaking peoples REQUIRE the use of MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC?"

Answer: *"Currently it does not require the use of mechanical instruments."*

Question: Is it the practice of Greek churches in the USA to use instrumental music in worship? In Greece today? Why?

Answer: Yes, in the USA. No, for the most part in Greece, where it is considered an innovation. Because the organ of God = the voice = is more sublime than any man made."

Question: "Do you consider that 'psallontes, in Ephesians 5:19 is correctly translated "making melody?"

Answer. *"Not exactly; I think it's a poetic sentence structure of Saint Paul, repeating the same with different words, - all meaning to sing."*

Conclusion: Some Greek Orthodox Churches have introduced the use of mechanical instruments of music into their worship, but not much in Greece where it is considered an innovation. There they psallo, by merely singing.

Martin Luther (1520) believed strongly in the power of song and singing. He wrote, *Music is an endowment and a gift from God, not a gift of men...I place music next to theology and give it the highest praise.*” He did not use instruments in worship. In one of his famous statements he said. *“The organ in worship is the insignia of Baal! The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews.”*

John Calvin, the reformer wrote in his commentary on Psalm 33: 2 and 1 Samuel 15, (1535-1559) *“It (instrumental music) is not more suitable than the burning of incense and the lighting of tapers, (lamps) or revival of shadows of the law...men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise, but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the Apostles is far more pleasing to Him.”* *“The voice of man...excels all inanimate instruments of music.”*

John Knox (1552-1572) was a Scottish religious reformer did not use instruments of music in worship and referred to the organ as *“a Kist (chest) of whistles.”*

In the Church of England in their ‘Christian Encyclopedia’ written by W.J. Conybeare & J.S. Howson they commented on Ephesians 5: 19 with these words. *“thru out the whole passage there is a contrast implied between the heathen and the Christian practice...When you meet, let your enjoyment consist not in fullness of wine, but in fullness of the spirit; let your song be, not the drinking songs of the heathen feasts, but psalm and hymns, and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart; while you sing them with praise, not of Bacchus or Venus, but of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

John Wesley wrote, *“I have no objection to the organ in the church, provided it is neither seen nor heard.”* (From the Letters to America 1784)

Adam Clark, a Methodist scholar who wrote a commentary on the whole Bible (1825) said of instruments, *“I am an old man, and an old minister and I here declare that I never knew them (musical Instruments) productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that they are productive of much evil. Music as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God abominate and abhor,”*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon had his sermons published every week from (1853-1891) and are still available. He was, for 40 years the preacher for the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle in London, England, wrote in his comments on 1 Corinthians 14:15; *“Sing unto Him. This is the sweetest and best music. We might as well pray to God by machinery as to praise Him by it.”*

The objection to the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is more than just a tradition in churches belonging to Christ. It is also not based only on what the Bible does not say; it is based on what the Bible does say. It is true that the New Testament is silent on the use of instruments in the early church. Is this not strange when the Old Testament frequently has references to their use, particularly in psalms?

The writings of the early ‘church fathers’ and defenders of the faith, such as Justin Martyr, (100-165 Israel & Rome) Clement of Alexandria, (Writer and teacher in Athens, Greece 154-215 AD) and the Roman historian, Pliny (62-113). Prove that the instrument was not used for almost 7 centuries after the church was established. What the Bible does say, and we have repeated this a number of times in this class, is that only vocal music, singing, was the form of praise in the beginning passages such as Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15, and Hebrews 2:12.

## WHAT DID THE RESTORATION LEADERS SAY ABOUT CHURCH MUSIC?

One of the main road blocks on the path to restoration of the Lord's church and to unity among believers has been, and still is, the introduction of the use of instrumental music in worship.

There are some areas where all of us respect the authority of God in areas of silence. In the Lord's Supper we have unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Why? Because God's Word says so! I might like a sausage biscuit and coffee much better? Why don't we have ham and gravy on the Lord's Table? Because the New Testament has mentioned only the bread and the wine, all else is excluded by silence. The absence of naming any thing else is the same as a prohibition against it.

This is implied also in the statement made by the restoration leaders. "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

Alexander Campbell said such music appealed to the animal spirits, but to be truly spiritual it was "*like a cowbell in a concert.*"

This is an attitude held by Campbell in his writings which advanced the idea of restoring the Lord's Church to that found in the New Testament,

Let's look at some quotes from those who worked to achieve that restoration.

(Refer to "What the Christians believed about USING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC" in worship, Pg. 10-11.)

In looking at the history of the Restoration movement we can be impressed by the contrast between their approach to the study and practice of God' Word as compared to those of the religious organization of the day all around them and from which they separated themselves.

Though the Restoration Movement began as a reaction against a distorted religious scene, its principles were defined and spread only because studious and intelligent men opened their minds and considered fairly the teachings of the Bible and its New Testament.

The early movement was not an effort to exclude those who practiced things contrary to the New Testament but rather an invitation for all people to discover and recover the Divine truths in their lives and their worship practices.

Those who did not accept the teaching of men like Alexander Campbell or Barton Stone were not anathematized but were encouraged to continue in efforts to evaluate their creeds in the light of the Bible with honest Bible study.

The idea grew because of an open-minded attitude for truth!

This is the kind of attitude we should still have toward restoration, not only in keeping the church pure but also in keeping ourselves pure and compliant with God's Word.

When a teaching is being reviewed in a sermon, a Bible Study Class, or in our individual study, we ought not only go by the quotes of our predecessors as authority, all men are fallible, but we such give the thoughts of the topic a complete review of the issue in the light of God's Word.

I trust that is what we have been able to do in this class on singing.

I have never been a Campbellite as I was baptized into Christ and His church before I really new much about the restoration movement, but now that I have studied the reformation and the restoration movements I can appreciate what these men and their female contemporaries had to go thru to arrive at the conclusions they had, and the effort they put into blessing the church with their findings.

The restoration that is really important is what God is doing in your life and what you are doing to better follow what God expects of you. A personal restoration, that is a real restoration.

The restoration attitude is, in Campbell's words in his Millennial Harbinger in 1842 page 327, "*We ought... (always) to act under the conviction that we may be wiser today than yesterday , and that whatever is true can suffer no hazard from a candid and careful reconsideration.*"

## Questionable doctrine found in songs

The sinner's prayer, and a Caution in the omitted themes, while singing songs that could be a cause for persons believing they are saved, by faith, only, grace, only, or the sinner's prayer and even with a change of life. ONLY.

Billy Graham taught of God and a need to trust in Jesus and he used the song Amazing Grace to follow up his meetings. But he sent the prospect to local protestant people to help them develop their faith. His theme song was "Amazing Grace. Grace, the sweet sound that saved a sinner, and now knowing he was lost, changed to believing Jesus. Now he thinks he is saved as of the time he believed, He thought that he was safe thus far, He said he was blind but now he could see. But there is no mention of the obedience to the command of Jesus in Mark 16:16 or Mathew 28: 19 & 20. Jesus said baptism is necessary for salvation, and Romans 6: 1 to 6 tells it is a burial, and rising up again.

As we find in Acts 2, baptism, along with repentance, confession and belief, brought forgiveness of sin, **salvation**, and being added to the **Lord's church**. There was no other church than Christ's church.

Recently a song I had never heard before was sung which was about a man in the night who decided to repent and he prayed and he thought he was saved, Now, in his room alone, he was very joyful of his new salvation. No mention of someone there to baptize him in his bathtub, or even leaving the room for baptism. Read what Jesus said in Mark 16: 16 *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned"*.

Billy and Franklin Graham, Billie's son did get much good accomplished in getting bibles into many countries controlled by the devil and even had some chaplains in some countries who did baptize

the new believers, immersing sinners for forgiveness of sin. Some of this was even done in active war zones .

But many denominations still believe in salvation by calling on God, expressing their faith, and trusting in that for salvation, but no obedience to what Jesus said saves (belief and immersion- baptism,)

This is an old doctrine put together from false teachers in the Catholic church, and many protestants churches who protested the Catholic teaching , but still follow some of their false teaching, {faith or grace only, or the “sinners’ prayer.” It reminds us what Satan told Eve in the garden, Genesis 3 : 4. “You shall not surely die! The opposite of what the woman had told the serpent what God had said.

In the songs written by those following these doctrines, baptism is not mentioned. These songs which still tell of the steps to salvation can still be used as invitation song, but would need to be followed by call for baptism for the salvation omitted in the song.,

The song “Out of My Bondage” ,mentioning sorrow failure and loss, pride and fear Jesus I come to thee” The solution is “Jesus I Come” into freedom , gladness, and gain of the cross, and to get out of sin , the solution is “**JESUS I COME**. But again, there is no mention of obedience to the commands of Christ, the apostle Peter, or Paul, and the frequent writings in the New Testament telling of the baptism the people who were called SAINTS had to submit too.

I was a victim of this kind of song writing also. My brother in law , Hank Dykstra, when he was very young wanted to give his live to the Lord, but thru army days and marriage he fell away from that desire. But after heart problems after rejecting what he wanted in his early he life, and returned to a church and was Baptized at the age of 47.

HE WROTE A POEM CALLED "Lost and Found" and he carved these words into a plaque he hung on a wall in his house. "Once I was lost and led far astray: and the hand of God's children showed me the way. A hand of friendship, a smile, and a prayer, made my life happy and free from despair. So, reach out and touch those that need Him today, that they might know Jesus, to trust and obey, their lives will be richer because you did care, because of Christ Jesus, your smile and your prayer."

As I was walking thru the factory where I was employed, I began to think of these words and began to put a tone to it. But I did not think to revise the words to what the bible tells us about salvation. To know Jesus, to trust and obey, must bring us to what Jesus said after His resurrection and before his return to heaven.

**Matthew 28: 18-20**, "And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Mark 16:15-16, "And He (Jesus) said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe ( and obviously then does not obey with baptism) will be condemned.**"

And what Peter taught the people in Acts 2:38; Acts 2:38-39, "Then Peter said to them," Repent and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is you and your children, and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Acts 2: 40**, And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

KJV AND NKJV Acts 2:46-47, So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**"

But when I copied the words, I did not include the way of salvation in these scriptures. He did say to trust and obey, but did not mention what

to obey. Repentance, confession, and baptism (immersion) that results in forgiveness of sin.

So, this subject is song leading and when a song like this is used but leaves the false teaching to slip into it's meaning, we should as with any invitation , whether in song or not, should mention the complete action that Jesus commanded for salvation. Baptism by immersion and as

Roman 6 reads "**Romans 6:3-4**, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. Therefore, we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" His death was on the cross, he was buried in a tomb, then He arose to new life, we do that in dying with Christ in the action of baptism, being immersed completely as if in death. Repentance comes first, must be dead to the world and our sins. We don't bury someone who is not dead! We rise to begin a new life in Christ. (Newness of life.)

I did this with two other songs, one in the 1980's called "HOUR BY HOUR" And another in the early years of this century. Called "HAVE YOU THOUGH ABOUT YOUR SOUL? Neither of these two ever got a copyright but if someone would find a use for these, I will enclose a copy of each. May God bless!