

## With Music in Mind

### Introduction

I thought I would choose a topic that is near and dear to my heart – and hopefully yours as well. Steve Hogan and I have often talked about having a message that gives you insight into how to approach the singing portion of our worship at HBC.

Music is a huge component of today's Christian culture and always has been for the people of God. The first mention of singing is Exodus 15:1ff which is the song of Moses to praise God for defeating the Egyptians. This song is again referenced in Revelation 15 regarding God's final victory over the believers' enemy in the end times - the beast and his image. God chose this song of Moses' as a fitting bookend for the conquering people of God.

God Himself showed how important music is to worshiping Him by placing a collection of 150 songs in the middle of the Old Testament- the book of Psalms. You may have heard someone say that they really liked the worship today meaning the singing. Music may be an important part of worship, but it is not the entirety of worship in a worship service.

Many churches use music as a way to draw crowds. They see it mainly for its entertainment value. But God designed music to glorify Himself. He placed beauty and order in it to reflect His nature. Therefore, it is important for us to understand how to properly view music when we worship Him.

That is our main topic today – how at Hope Bible Church should we approach singing our worship songs. We will explore this using our key Scripture text for today - **1 Corinthians 14:15b "...; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also."** At Hope Bible Church, we use this as our guideline for singing during our worship times.

### Singing with the spirit

What does it mean to "sing with the spirit?" The "spirit" is the conscious part of man by which we are aware of our feelings and the need for meaning in our life. Singing with the spirit is one way that the emotional and contemplative nature of our soul pours itself out to God.

The book of Psalms is a collection of biblical songs that display the height and depth of every human emotion. They teach us that God recognizes that we are emotional beings. And they teach us that God gave us songs as a good way to talk with Him about and deal with those feelings. One good example of how to talk with or sing to God about our feelings is Psalm 42.

### **Ps 42:2-4, 8-11**

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

3 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;  
And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life.

8 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?  
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me,  
While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

In this passage, we find the Psalmist actually speaking to his soul. He finds himself depressed and in despair about the harassment of his enemies and the feeling that God doesn't hear him or care about him. He wants relief from those feelings. He is looking for a way to lift himself up out of this depression. As he pleads in song with his soul to remember that "The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;" we ultimately find him commanding his soul to "Hope in God," using the reasoning "for I will yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." Have you ever found yourself talking to yourself in order to overcome discouragement? You can use songs like *Day by Day* or *It Is Well With My Soul* to help you express yourself to God.

In Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas were locked in a dirty, dungeon of a prison. Hungry, thirsty, bugs and vermin crawling about, as well as disease and all forms of human uncleanness. It was not at all a pretty or, even, civil sight. It could have left them discouraged and hopeless. They could have felt abandoned by God and upset at Him for letting them be unjustly abused at the hands of those holding them captive. Instead, we find their songs of praise to God resounding throughout the prison at midnight. We see it

bringing hope and salvation to them and others in the prison. Through Paul's and Silas' examples, we see that music is used for encouragement to help us persevere in the most difficult of circumstances through songs of praise. I can imagine them singing as loud as they could a song like *And Can It Be* or *O Boundless Salvation*.

Besides singing in the midst of being emotionally down or challenged, we are instructed to sing to the Lord when our heart is full of gladness. In Hebrews 2:12, the writer quotes from Psalm 22:22 the section where our Savior is singing God's praise to His brethren in the midst of the congregation.

**Hebrews 2:11-12** For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise."

The context is God the Son praising God the Father for His incredible plan of defeating temptation, sin and death through the humbling act of His becoming "like His brethren" to die as the perfect sacrificial substitute on their behalf. Jesus gave us the example to sing while rejoicing in the truths about our salvation. In a more direct way, James 5:13 commands us to sing praises when we are cheerful. It says, "...Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises." By this simple act of joyfully singing songs like *Psalm 113:1-5* or *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go*, you will bring honor and exaltation to our God by showing others His overflow from your heart.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we see how the God-given beauty of singing can be misused or corrupted by unbelievers. In Exodus 32, immediately following the Israelite rescue by God from the Egyptians, we read about them getting impatient as they wait for Moses to return from his meeting with God.

**Ex 32:15-19** Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. And the tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets. Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "there is a sound of war in the camp." But he said, "It is not the sound of the cry of triumph, Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat; But the sound of singing I hear." And it came about, as soon as Moses came near the

camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

The result of their reaction can be summed up as the wrong god, the wrong worship, and the wrong singing. It cost them thousands of lives and more time waiting near the mountain.

In **Revelation 18:19-22**, as God describes Babylon's downfall and judgment, the first thing that He mentions is that "the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer." God is using the removal of music as a means of removing their happiness and enhancing their sorrow, which is part of His judgment. Their music was definitely not a pleasing sound of worship in His ears or He would have spared it! When you think about much of the last few decades of popular, secular music, you find it becoming more progressively and overtly unrighteous and ungodly. Most of the songs have one of two themes. Either they promote sinful behavior as a means of finding fulfillment in life or they try to get empty, mindless phrases repeating in our heads instead of an encouraging, praiseworthy song about God and His ways. As we move towards the end of this age, we see that civilization's choice of music is definitely approaching this "Babylonian" type of music deserving of God's judgment.

Now, let's consider what is meant by the phrase "I will sing with the mind also." In view of being purposeful about singing with the spirit in order to uplift us from discouragement, help us overcome difficult circumstances, and sing praises when we're cheerful, it makes sense that singing is also a "thinking man's" activity.

### **Singing with the Mind**

Early on in the history of God's development of Israel into a nation, we find David formalizing the role of music in their worship of God. Also, **this activity** is a good point for demonstrating the relationship between singing with or in the spirit and singing with the mind. In 1 Chronicles 25, we find David designating the priestly musicians for the purpose of prophesying before the Lord with harp, lyre and cymbals. The word "prophesy" means speaking forth God's message under the influence of the Spirit. This passage shows how God communicated His feelings about Israel and communicated

His truth to His people through the medium of song. As the passage unfolds, it demonstrates a progression that more directly involves the participation of individuals who are writing the songs. It starts with God directly influencing the songwriter through the Holy Spirit and ends with the songwriters recording their own memories of how God blessed them. It requires them to use their minds to call to their remembrance the works of the Lord in their midst.

**1 Chronicles 25:1-7]** First in verse 1, we see David and the leaders setting apart specific families “who were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals;” This is the word that indicates that they were under the direct influence or inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Next in sequence in verse 2, we see that some of the singers were “under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king [that is king David].” This would require dialogue between David and Asaph in order to think through, edit or refine the songs. Since the king was God's anointed at that time, this collaboration verified that the words were truly of God.

Then in verse 3, we are directed to those “who prophesied in giving thanks and praising the Lord.” In order to appropriately do this, they needed to consciously acknowledge God's provision and providence in their lives. They had to actively use their minds to call to their remembrance the works of the Lord in their midst. You cannot say exactly what percent of this remembering was God putting it into their minds versus what they brought from memory or written record, but it definitely shows men being more involved in the process.

Last in the progression, in verse 6, we are told of the musicians used “for the service of the house of God.” The purpose for this service was to accomplish the exaltation of God Almighty, and the edification of the believers as they got to better know Him through the words and emotions of the songs. Both the exaltation of God and the edification of the believers is part of the mission of HBC and we in the music worship team purpose to help everyone in the sanctuary fulfill these purposes every time we sing together.

These musicians were from the families of Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman, who, along with David, wrote most of the Psalms. You will see their names in

the headings of most of the Psalms. Note that verse seven indicates that there were 288 trained in skillful singing; what a choir that would have been to hear! They trained so that they would be conscious about the fact that their singing was to exalt God and be an encouragement to others. I want to reiterate that the purpose of going through this passage is to help us see that from the beginning of organized group worship, God intended to use music to communicate His very personal words and His truth to His people.

Moving to the Epistles in the New Testament, we see that it is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus Christ to use singing for more than just personal, devotional praise, but as edification for other believers; even if you think that all you can do is make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

**Colossians 3:16** says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

This verse specifically commands us to use singing for two things in the church. First, we are to be teaching each other in song which means being actively involved with doctrinal instruction or imparting the truth. We obey this command every worship service through our congregational singing. Many of the hymns like *In Christ Alone*, *How Firm A Foundation* and, our newest song, *Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder* are loaded with truth that instructs our minds while we sing. Second, we are to be admonishing one another in song by bringing to our mind or our attention a warning. *Stand Up*, *Stand Up for Jesus*, *Revive Us Again*, and *Make Me Like You* are good examples of songs that allow us to exhort and admonish one another. Remember that you are not just singing to yourself or, even just to God, while you are here in our worship service, but you are singing to one another. We are all hearing the words of the songs and repeating them in order to reinforce their truth in our hearts.

It is instructive to notice that God gave us three main classifications of song in order to accomplish our teaching and admonishing. These three types begin with psalms, which means singing with instrumental accompaniment. They focus on prayers and praise to God. Next come hymns, which focus on glorifying the character of God. Hymns like *Holy, Holy, Holy* and *Immortal, Invisible* are almost hyper-praise songs where it appears that the writer was almost unable to contain or fully know how to explain how he felt about the greatness of God!

The third group are spiritual songs. These are songs that are internally driven by the Spirit in response to meditation on God Almighty and/or His word and works. The Greek word for "spiritual songs" is *ode pneumatikos* which, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary, carries the meaning "songs inspired by the Spirit." The root word is like our word "pneumatic" which means to be powered by air. This is the same correlation that Jesus makes between the Spirit of God and the wind in John 3 when He is talking with Nicodemus. The implication is that you must be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to obey this command to teach and admonish with songs.

The sister verse to Colossians 3:16 is **Ephesians 5:19** which says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;" This word "speaking" is a generic term that can include singing. So when you're singing; you're speaking the truth to others. It is interesting to note that the word for "making melody" is derived from the Greek word "psallo" which is from the Hebrew word "Psalms" and both mean singing with instrumental accompaniment. Paul's use of this specific word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, twice in this verse and once in Colossians 3:16, dispels the thought that the Church only sang *a Capella*, without accompaniment, in the New Testament times. They were commanded to sing to one another in concert with instruments.

### **Applying Your Spirit and Mind to the Music**

This may seem like a lot of information all at one time, but the important thing is that you learn how to apply your spirit and mind to the worship songs that we sing.

As I already mentioned, the primary types of worship songs are Psalms, which are songs of prayer and petition, hymns of praise, and spiritual songs, which are primarily doctrine in song. I'd like to illustrate this by having us look together at a representative song from each of these categories. My goal is that you will be able to have a more enriched time of worship in spirit and mind during our singing together and in your personal devotions.

**Psalm 67** is a song of prayer and petition mixed with proclamation about why God blesses us. The song's verses are sung in a contemplative manner, while the chorus is sung more forcefully and with exuberance in order to emphasize its praising nature.

***Immortal, Invisible*** is a fantastic example of a hymn of praise. It is almost a list of key characteristics of God that are sung with enthusiasm.

***Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder*** is essentially doctrine in song. It uses a couple of repetitive themes to help more clearly teach its main points and explain some reasons why we praise God.

Each of these songs can be found on your song sheets for today. You are encouraged to go back through them later in order to sing and think through them. Think about what type of song they are Psalm, hymn or spiritual song. Ask yourself what is the main purpose or teaching in the song. And then let it lift your soul to God. It is my desire that our worship songs will motivate you to want to learn more of God's truth, as well as to help you meditate on the greatness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, In light inaccessible Hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, The Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious -- Thy great name we praise.

Let us praise, and join the chorus Of the saints enthroned on high;

Here they trusted Him before us, Now their praises fill the sky:

"Thou hast washed us with Your blood; Thou art worthy, Lamb of God!"

God be gracious to us and bless us And cause His face to shine upon us,

That Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee.

**"And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me;**

**And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;**

**I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."**

**Psalm 27:6**