

Worship Matters CE - Week 4

The Role of Singing in Worship

Have you ever pondered why one form of worship is singing? How does our act of singing glorify God? How does the act of singing benefit us? What if we don't feel like singing? What if we can't sing?

The Bible exhorts us to sing. There are many examples of singing praises to God rather than just speaking praises to God. *Psalm 47:6-7 reads: Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!*

Moses and the people of Israel sing of their triumph over Pharaoh in Exodus 15. (*verse 11: Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*) Paul and Silas sing at midnight in prison in Acts 16. These acts of singing, while done in different scenarios, are done to reflect God's glory and magnify His name in gratefulness and in awe. In other words, we sing with emotion.

Why do we sing?

Singing provides a way to store God's word in our hearts.

We sing because it enables us to remember and meditate on God's word for us. Bob Kauflin

- Why does this work?
 - We can sing words slower and pause between phrases. We have time to think about it.
 - We can repeat words to produce impact. A good example is "It is Well". It is quite different when we speak those lyrics.
 - We are not only driving words into our hearts but into the hearts of others as well. When we come to sing, we are building one another up. *Eph 5:17-20 ...be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,...* We are also teaching one another, *Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
 - *DA Carson writes - Every authentic adoration is instruction because it celebrates God's deeds and God's character. And expresses at the same time, commitment to the God it celebrates.* In other words, while we worship, we are also instructing.
- Singing can store other things in our hearts as well.

- We all know the effectiveness of a catchy secular song. The lyrics instantly get implanted into your head.
- This can also be true for songs of worship and praise. God has purposefully designed this in all of us, hence Eph 5:17-20. However, we must be careful lest we sing incorrect doctrine and songs of feelings towards one another. Doctrine and theology are critical in singing songs to our Lord. We must align our heads and our hearts.
- John Piper writes: *Singing about Christian things in Christian settings is not necessarily pleasing to the Lord. Amos 5:23-24 "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*
- Jonathan Edwards says that his duty is to, *"raise the affections of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with."*

Singing expresses emotions & thoughts that words cannot express alone.

The reason we sing is because there are depths and heights and intensities and kinds of emotion that will not be satisfactorily expressed by mere prosaic forms, or even poetic readings. There are realities that demand to break out of prose into poetry and some demand that poetry be stretched into song. John Piper

- The longest book in the Bible is the Psalms. A collection of songs that expresses many emotions from gratitude to lament.
- *John Piper - Singing is the Christian's way of saying: God is so great that thinking will not suffice, there must be deep feeling; and talking will not suffice, there must be singing.*

Singing is a gift from God that stirs the emotions.

The duty of singing praises to God seems to be given wholly to excite and express religious affections. Jonathan Edwards

- We must be careful not to seek spiritual goosebumps. Recall that singing in worship is to be for the teaching, admonishing of one another in wisdom, of thanking the Lord (Col 3:16), of singing the glory of His name (Ps 66:2), of singing praises to His name (Ps 47:6, James 5:13), and is to be used to serve the Lord with gladness (Ps 100:2).
- Worship is not to be characterized by seeking our own emotional satisfaction but by being satisfied in God, leading to the overflow of emotion knowing His truths.
- Singing allows us to respond fully to God in His works. Responding fully means we are to respond emotionally and expressively. Grateful hearts, gratitude.

- Singing and music is an emotional language. Our aim should be to excite the emotions to respond to God. We are to reserve our highest and best affections for Him.

What if you don't feel like singing?

What are some reasons that we don't feel like singing to God?

- We forget the reason we sing.
 - We have forgotten that we are forgiven. *Restrict yourself to a diet grace and the Gospel. Bob Kauflin*
 - Read the book of Romans.
 - Study theology and doctrine to gain a better knowledge of who God is and what he teaches in the Bible.
 - We may lack understanding and lack feelings to feel strongly for him. As our understanding grows of God our emotions will grow.
 - Singing helps us remember, singing helps us respond.
- We are concerned with what people will think (e.g. We have a terrible singing voice)
 - *Isaiah 51:12-13 - "I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, and has forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?"*
 - No where in the Bible does it state that a spectacular voice is required for the worship of God.
 - The singing and worship in this life is only a glimpse and reflection of the singing and worship to be had in heaven with perfected bodies and voices.
- We are not "in the right mood".
 - We should be reminded that the base requirement to sing to God is not that we are "red-hot" (as John Piper puts it) for Him. But worship can be the remorse, that we offer to God, that we are not feeling like we should. *John Piper writes: The heart can be real even if it is not as enflamed with zeal as it ought to be - which it never is in this life.*
 - Acts 16: Paul and Silas were beaten with rods (21), thrown into prison (23), had their feet fastened with stocks (24), and yet that night, sang hymns to God and prayed.

So music and singing are necessary to Christian faith and worship for the simple reason that the realities of God and Christ, creation and salvation, heaven and hell are so great that when they are known truly and felt duly, they demand more than discussion and

analysis and description; they demand poetry and song and music. Singing is the Christian's way of saying: God is so great that thinking will not suffice, there must be deep feeling; and talking will not suffice, there must be singing. John Piper