

The Singing Church

Ephesians 5:18-19 / Colossians 3:16

Main Idea

In joyful obedience to God, the local church sings songs with gospel depth and gospel breadth from the heart, with each other, to the Lord.

Overview

Why Do We Sing?

- We sing because it's commanded
 - Direct commands twice in NT (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
 - 50+ commands in OT (e.g. Psalm 47; 96)
- God's commands are a reflection of God's character – God sings
 - God the Father sings – Zephaniah 3:17
 - God the Son sings – Matthew 26:30 (cf. Romans 15:19; Hebrews 2:12)
 - God the Spirit inspires singing – Eph. 5:19
- God's commands are for our joy – they are how we know and enjoy him
- So in God's command to sing, he's commanding our joy

What Should We Sing?

- *"Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs"*
 - Psalms – the book of Psalms, which would have been the early churches song book
 - Hymns – likely refers to the hymns written by the early church; we find some of these in Scripture (e.g. Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11)
 - Spiritual Songs – broad umbrella referring to anything enabled/inspired by the Holy Spirit
 - In short, all of these are synonyms encouraging us to use all appropriate forms to worship through song
- According to this pattern, our songs should have depth
 - Clarity – so people know what we are singing
 - Accuracy – so our songs explain and expound what God has already said
 - Depth – so that we contemplate the deep doctrines of God
- According to this pattern, our songs should have breadth
 - Diversity in the types of songs we sing
 - Diversity in the content of the songs we sing

How Should We Sing?

- From the heart
 - This means our singing is not separated from the rest of our lives – we cannot fool God by acting one way while singing true lyrics
 - This means our singing is acceptable before God not because we have a smooth, polished voice - we're told to make a joyful noise not a beautiful harmony
 - This means our external actions may show what's going on in our heart – after all, what's in our heart has a way of working itself out to our hands
- With each other
 - *"addressing one another..."*
 - *"teaching and admonishing one another..."*
 - While our singing has a vertical aspect, there's also a horizontal aspect
 - In our songs we are encouraging, teaching, comforting those around us
 - In our songs, we not only communicate the gospel to each other, but celebrate the gospel with each other.

- To the Lord
 - Ultimately, our singing is to the Lord – in this we join the chorus of heaven and will do so for eternity (Revelation 5)

Questions

Discussion Starter: What are various places people sing? Why do you think singing is so universal?

1. Read Ephesians 5:1-21. What's the context and overall message of these verses?
Ephesians was written to remind the Christians in Ephesus who they are in Christ (chs. 1-3) and how to live out their faith. Specifically, in these verses Paul is instructing them on how to live with gospel light in a dark world.
2. In verse 18, Paul gives one negative command – “Do not get drunk with wine” – and one positive command – “Be filled with the Spirit.” How does the negative command help us understand what it means to be filled with the Spirit?
When a person is drunk they are under the control of alcohol in every way – their speech, actions, thoughts, etc. are influenced. So it is with the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Holy Spirit, is to have our speech, actions, thoughts, etc. controlled by Him. And his “job” is to glorify Christ (John 14:16). Every believer has the Spirit (cf. Rm 8:9), but sometimes we are more controlled by him than at other times. That's why Scripture says believers can grieve (Eph. 4:30) or quench (1 Thess. 5:19) the Spirit.
3. In verse 19, Paul commands us to sing. Why is it important to consider why we do various religious activities, including singing? Have you ever stopped to consider this before? How does singing connect us to the overall story/character of God?
Help the group think about why we sing in the first place. Try not to just let it fall flatly at – “we are commanded.” Consider why it's important to consider the “why” of what we do. Try to connect the command back to the character of God, and how God's commands are for our good.
4. Paul tells us to sing “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” What does he mean by this? How does Colossians 3:16 and the command to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” inform what we should be singing?
5. How do you see Restoration Church trying to joyfully obey Paul's instructions in what we sing?
The whole idea of psalm/hymns/spiritual songs is Paul's way of saying our singing should be true to God's word and varied; it should have depth and breadth. Help the group think about how what we sing shapes what we believe; how what we sing, in some part, determines our spiritual diet; how does singing help the word dwell richly in us? Help the group think through both the depth and breadth of Restoration singing. Though, like every discussion, they don't have to use the words “depth” and “breadth” – the idea is that our songs should have doctrinal truth and diversity (type, content, style, vertical, horizontal, looking back, looking forward, etc.).

For example, you can take the songs we sang this past Sunday and discuss them. It might be good to even print out the lyrics of some/all of the songs and discuss them.

Awesome God, Not to Us, Come Thou Fount, O Splendor of God's glory Bright, Bless the Lord, Be Thou My Vision, This is Our God, Doxology

This coming Sunday: Arise O God & Shine, This I Believe, I Will Glory in My Redeemer, Behold the Lamb, The Saving One

Song database with lyrics [here](http://restorationchurchdc.com/musicteam/). (http://restorationchurchdc.com/musicteam/)

6. What does it mean to sing “with/from the heart?” What implication does this have for you as we gather to sing each Sunday? How does singing help connect our hearts and heads and hands?
7. Paul highlights a horizontal aspect to our singing – “*addressing one another.*” Why is it important to consider the horizontal aspect of singing? What implications does this have on us as a church body?

Discuss the various aspects of signing from the heart and with each other. Drive toward the implications for the way this affects us both individually and corporately. For example, singing from the heart, means we need to prepare and come with hearts ready to engage God through singing; it means the most important thing is not a beautiful voice, but making a joyful noise – that is, anyone can sing! Get the group to think about how singing inflames doctrine with devotion; how singing helps us not only believe the gospel, but feel it.

Also discuss the horizontal aspect of our singing. That we are to sing to one another, which implies we need to actually sing; it means the congregation is the “main” song leader; it means we need to sing songs that are accessible to the congregation; it means we should sing songs that focus on “we/us/our” not just “me/mine/I.”

8. What are your favorite songs we sing at Restoration Church? Why?
9. What are some practical ways you can prepare for our singing on Sunday and use the songs we sing through the week to help you worship?

Take some time, either at the end, or through to discuss some of people’s favorite songs we sing (or maybe even songs they hope we will sing). Discuss what makes these songs enjoyable/encouraging. Also talk about how we can practically prepare for our time of singing on Sunday mornings and what impact this might have on our time together.

Accountability: How have you been encouraged recently through the ministry of Restoration Church? Are there others you have been encouraged by? How can the group pray for you?