

PATHWAYS

WEEK 7 | Why Do We Sing?
Psalm 33:1-3

The Big Question: Why do we sing and play music?

Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. (Psalm 33:1-3 - ESV)

1. Singing stirs up and expresses God-glorifying emotion

“The duty of singing praises to God seems to be given wholly to excite and express religious affections. There is no other reason why we should express ourselves to God in verse rather than in prose and with music, except that these things have a tendency to move our affections.” - Jonathan Edwards

2. Singing helps us remember truth about God

And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.” So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel. (Deuteronomy 31:21-22 ESV)

3. Singing helps us express unity in the gospel

4. Singing and playing music creates an atmosphere where God’s voice can be more readily heard.

But now bring me a musician.” And when the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him. (2 Kings 3:15 - ESV)

5. Singing and playing music is engaging in spiritual warfare

Samuel 16:23 - *“And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.”*

6. The Father sings. The Son sings. The Spirit sings. How can we keep from singing?

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zephaniah 3:17 ESV)

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:30 ESV)

“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” (Eph. 5:18b-19)

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

*Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
 praise him in his mighty heavens!
Praise him for his mighty deeds;
 praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

*Praise him with trumpet sound;
 praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance;
 praise him with strings and pipe!
Praise him with sounding cymbals;
 praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD! (Psalm 150, ESV)*

The Bible includes more than four hundred references to singing, and more than fifty direct commands to praise God by singing to and about him. Obviously, the writers of Scripture saw singing to God as an important part of our Christian life!

Commands can be challenging or frustrating, but it relieves the pressure to know that we were created to sing. We are all singers. Regardless of our ability to carry a note, God made us to sing along with all of creation, and he cares far more about the posture of our heart in singing than about our talent.

- **Question 1:** Can you recall your earliest memory of singing? How did it make you feel?
- **Question 2:** What do you experience during congregational singing—joy, fear, self-consciousness, freedom?
- **Question 3:** What response do you have personally to the “command” to sing praise to God?
- **Question 4:** How do you feel about singing not only songs you like, but songs you need to sing?
- **Question 5:** What are some things that might help cultivate singing with intentional thankfulness?

Final Question: Is there a song that has become an “anchor” for your soul? Once you decide on a song that encourages you about the truths of Christianity, play it and sing along!

MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

Icebreaker: Has there ever been a time when you got “caught” singing? (i.e. when you thought you were home alone, when someone caught you in your car, etc.)

Introduction: There are several ways to witness in the Christian life: we witness to unbelievers by sharing the gospel with them in conversations; we witness to the character of God by living Christlike lives; we witness to the coming kingdom by our corporate lives in the local church.

We also can, and should, witness by the way we sing. Whether we know it or not, our corporate singing witnesses to something. Ideally, the words we sing will witness to the gospel, and the enthusiasm, joy, and passion with which we sing will witness to the power of Jesus Christ.

- **Question 1:** If there were a visitor to your church who knew nothing about the gospel, what would your church music (selections, presentation, and congregational engagement) convey to him or her about your faith and love for God and each other?
- **Question 2:** What is the difference in a powerful witness and a damaging witness when it comes to our singing?
- **Question 3:** What does your church’s music convey to people in your midst?
- **Question 4:** Why do you think there is such a temptation for Christians to get away from congregational singing, and to get away from singing the gospel?

READ THESE PASSAGES & DISCUSS TOGETHER:

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. (Colossians 3:16, ESV)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but 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, (Ephesians 5:18-19, ESV)

- **Question 1:** How does singing help us to abide in the presence of God?
- **Question 2:** What do you experience during congregational singing—joy, fear, self-consciousness, freedom?
- **Question 3:** What response do you have personally to the “command” to sing praise to God?
- **Question 4:** What is your favorite Christian song? Tell everyone why.