



The Good News

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Why do we sing?

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Why do we sing in worship services? You may have encountered this question already from those who visit and are not accustomed to congregational (especially acapella) singing. Did we have a ready answer to this question? Our goal is to answer this question now so that when we next encounter an inquiry concerning our melodious means of worshipping God, we will have a ready response.

God commands it! To answer the question posed, we do, of course, turn to the Bible for answers. It is worth noting that in the entire New Testament, there is not a single example of Christians playing musical instruments to worship God. It is, however, the example of the New Testament for God to be worshipped in song. In all of these instances of singing, it is also worth noting that there is not a single reference to instrumental music being played while the singing is taking place. For instance: in **Matt. 26:30** (**Mk. 14:26**) Jesus and His apostles sang a hymn to God; in **Rev. 5:9, 14:3, and 15:3** there is reference to a “new song”, a “song of Moses”, and a “song of the Lamb” being sung by the saints in Heaven; in **Acts 16:25** Paul and Silas sing hymns while imprisoned in Philippi; in **Rom. 15:9** Paul quotes David, in a context of glorifying God, as saying “*For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.*”; in **Heb. 2:12** the Hebrew writer again quotes David as saying, about Jesus, “*I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.*”; James says to sing psalms to God when cheerful in **Jas. 5:13**; Paul, in a context of spiritual gifts in the assembly of God, mentions the act of singing with understanding in **I Cor. 14:15**. Without a doubt, it is clear that the early church sang praises to God. Also, without a doubt, it is clear that instrumental music was not a part of that worship to God, and to claim it was makes an assumption that is not in any way suggested by Scripture. More to the point, singing is commanded by God in **Eph. 5:19** and **Col. 3:16**. Both of these passages are found in contexts dealing with how the brethren are to interact with

each other. Part of this interaction is to include teaching and admonishing (**Col. 3:16**), and making melody in the heart to the Lord as one body (**Eph. 5:19**).

How are we to sing? This question is worth asking since we learn that singing is a vital aspect of worshipping God. As we look at **Eph. 5:19**, we observe that there are really two commandments in one. The first commandment is “...*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...*” Paul is specific as to what this command is to include in **Col. 3:16** “...*teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...*” The second command in **Eph. 5:19** is “...*singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...*” and in **Col. 3:16**, “...*singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*” We must understand that when we sing, we sing to each other to encourage, teach, admonish, and edify as we all seek to follow the will of God in this world. We also must understand that at the same time we are singing with our voices to each other, we sing with our hearts to God. When the church was first established, there was no rhyme or meter established for singing. The early Christians did not have songbooks as we have them, nor did they have to think about quarter-notes and whether or not the song started with a low C or a high C. These adaptations have been made to our worship as our society advanced because our definition of “melody” changed. We must understand, however, that these beautiful melodies that we sing and hear with our voices and ears are not so much for God...they are more for us. God couldn’t care less if we are unable to “carry a tune in a bucket” so long as we sing beautifully with our hearts, focusing on the words we sing.

So, while we sing today, let’s do our best to sing the songs as they have been melodiously written for one another’s encouragement. But our melody does not have to be perfect. The focus should be on the words we sing and singing them with heartfelt joy. If we do this, our singing will be beautiful regardless of which notes we can’t quite hit.