



We are picking up where we left off last week in Ephesians 5. I left off in the middle of verse 19: *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.* There are two clear but distinct dimensions to worship through music. There is the vertical dimension where we worship the Lord with our hearts. It is very personal and it must flow from the heart and not merely habit. When we think about worship through music, this is the dimension we almost always think about. Some will go so far as to downplay anything but this part of worship. But the Bible will have nothing of such an idea. There is also the horizontal dimension—*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.*

Due to their solid theological commitments as well as their musical excellence, Keith and Kristyn Getty have a vital voice in this area of the Christian faith. They are committed to writing both great music and God-honoring lyrics. I want to start with some helpful quotes from them.

Keith Getty has said that “Part of how every great movement has built deep believers is with the songs they sing.” This resonates with Martin Luther’s ideas and is why his reformation of church music impacted the world of his day as much as his teaching.

Keith Getty has also said, “I want to be at a church where people sing together and encourage each other in song.” This is a summary of Paul’s teaching here in chapter five. Why is this horizontal dimension so important? After all, most of us have music on our laptops and mobile devices and we can “worship” by listening anytime we want. I hope you have all experienced being deeply moved by an old hymn or wonderful worship song in a private moment. Maybe it brought tears to your eyes or just welled up with joy in your heart, and it’s a wonderful blessing to have such ready access to any music we want at any time. Last Sunday I told you that the purpose of the horizontal dimension of worship was for encouragement and edification. If we can have both the vertical worship in our hearts and be edified and encouraged in the privacy of our own homes, why is it so important that we sing in church? What’s the point?

It is true that we can have multiple benefits from our private worship time but that’s just it—it is private. It’s just you and the Lord. Good! Do more of that! Make it is meaningful and as deep as

you possibly can. But Paul said to “address one another.” When you are sitting on the couch or your comfy chair with a steaming cup of joe and worshipping the Lord, there is no “one another” happening right then. It may be wonderful, but it is incomplete. This one another is just as important as every other “one another” in the Bible. There are 100 “one anothers” in 94 New testament verses.

- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Instruct one another (Romans 15:14)
- Serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13)
- Carry each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Forgiving each other (Ephesians 4:32)
- Do not lie to each other (Colossians 3:9)
- Encourage one another daily Hebrews 3:13)
- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)
- Build each other up (I Thessalonians 5:11)
- Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13)
- Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you (Romans 15:7)
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)

Tell me, which one of these should we skip over? I know we might like to pass over some of these hard commands but that’s not what I asked. Which of them should we skip over? Obviously, none of them. Therefore, we should not ignore verse 19 then—*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*. In fact, I would argue that when we address one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that we are also doing a lot of these other one anothers. When we sing together, we are building each other up. We are teaching one another. We are spurring one another on. We are encouraging one another. We are admonishing one another. We are living in harmony with one another.

This may all sound rather idealistic to you, but is that really happening? All we are doing is singing songs. I’ll say this much. It can be happening and ultimately, should be happening. Part of the way this happens goes back to what we talked about last week—that *singing* sound doctrine is just as important as *teaching* sound doctrine. Our music won’t be perfect. You won’t like every song for a variety of reasons, but as a church, we must take great care how we choose the music we sing. Songs teach, admonish and encourage us, both through the lyrics and the music. But if this can happen in the privacy of our own homes, you might still be wondering why we need to sing together. What is the benefit of this horizontal dimension of worship music? What do I get singing in church that I can’t get at home?

#### Unity in our beliefs

When we sing together, we are agreeing together in regard to the truths in the songs. Many of us don’t have much Christian fellowship throughout the week. We hang with unbelievers and breathe ungodly, atheistic air six days out of the week. Paul reminded us that the days are evil. Life is hard but when we come together, we are reminded that there are dozens and even

hundreds of other people that are walking the same path as we are. When fifty or a hundred other people are singing about God's faithfulness, about Christ's sacrifice and about our eternal destiny, that can be a very different thing than listening to the same song by yourself. We are united by these beliefs. We confess our shared doctrine through the melody of our voices. We may have doubted a truth during the week but it all seems so certain when we sing the truths together.

Consider one of the songs we sang this morning. Quoting...

There's something about the way saints of old used to wrap song around scripture that stirs the soul. Henry Williams Baker - who originally penned this hymn over 100 years ago - spent his life trying to describe the glory of God and inspire His people to respond through song, but this particular hymn was special, even to him.

As he lay on his deathbed in 1877, his final words were from this hymn:

Corrupt and foolish oft I strayed, yet in His love He sought me  
And on His shoulders gently laid, He brought me home rejoicing.

To Henry, those words were not simply a song to be sung on Sunday. Instead, they represented the theme of His life: worship of a King of redeeming love. The King of love my Shepherd is... What I love about this song is that it begins, not by reflecting on how precious we are, but how magnificent He is.<sup>1</sup>

Henry "died in 1877 in the parsonage of the church where he had served for more than thirty years, a country vicar in the poor edges of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's mighty Britain."<sup>2</sup>

Imagine the comfort of these words as he lay dying.

In death's dark vale, I fear no ill, with Thee, dear Lord, beside me  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still, the cross before to guide me.

This beautiful adaptation of Psalm 23 did not always sound like the version we sang this morning. It sounded more like an old hymn.<sup>3</sup> Personally, I like the 2013 version a lot better but it's the combination of Biblical truth and music that moves us as we sing the chorus together.

Never failing, Ruler of my heart  
Everlasting, Lover of my soul  
On the mountain high or in the valley low  
The King of Love my Shepherd is  
The King of Love my Shepherd is

As we sing we may look across the room and see a woman we know and remember that her mother recently died. We see her passionately singing to the Lord and we are encouraged, because if she can face that hardship and still have joy in her heart, then so can I. If a six year-old can sing these truths with childlike faith, I might be reminded to humble myself like a child and

receive this truth. If other people can gain strength and certainty when we sing together then I should be able to enter into this realm also.

And we do this all together. When we sing, we are 'one anothering.' King of love is an old hymn put to new music. Then we go further back still to exactly 150 years ago when these words were first penned with quill and paper that we all sang this morning. Both the lyrics and the music have stood the test of time.

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,  
tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
call for songs of loudest praise.

"Tune my heart to sing thy grace." The Lord is a divine tuner who adjusts the strings of our hearts which allows us to sing a melodious sonnet. Unless he tunes my heart in this way I will not want to sing of his grace. In fact, our hearts are prone to wander, aren't they?

Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,  
bind my wandering heart to thee:  
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
prone to leave the God I love;  
here's my heart, O take and seal it;  
seal it for thy courts above.

We can hum this quietly at home or blast it out in the shower, but as we sing it together, we are reminded that we are not alone. That it's not just my heart that is prone to wander but that every Christian heart is like that. It's why we gather. It's why we lean on one another. It's why we rejoice with those who rejoice and we weep with those who weep. All of this happens when we address one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

This morning we went back further still to almost 200 years ago to a song that has been sung on every corner of the globe.

Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,  
only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

When we sing this, we are reminded that the darkness of this world does hide the holiness of God. We live in a fallen world that is passing away. The eye of sinful man does not see this glory and sometimes I fail to see it, but I want to. I need to see it. I need to see Jesus in all his glory. I need to have him who is "perfect in power, in love and purity," close to me. I am not sinless, but he is. I am not holy, but I know the One who is. If I don't cry out in praise, Jesus said that "the very stones would cry out." Stones. Lifeless rocks will praise Jesus if we do not. We know that

the angels in heaven never cease their praise of the Holy One. We know that all believers will gather around the throne and sing to Jesus. We will sing songs like the one sung by the elders, by the angels and by every creature in heaven. (Rev. 5:9-10, 12-13)

“Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.”  
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honor and glory and blessing!”  
“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

As Kristyn Getty has said, “We are created, compelled, and commanded to sing.”<sup>4</sup> Keith chimed in declaring that “We want congregations to be known by their singing, not by their music.” Tomorrow Ryan and I are going to a conference in Minneapolis with about 2000 other people. Sometimes in large churches the worship team can drown out the congregation. That can happen at conferences as well but every time I’ve been to this conference, just about every last person belts out the songs. We don’t just watch other people sing. We address one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Conferences are nice but this principle of one anothering through congregational singing was really meant to take place in a local church. It’s doubtful I will have any impact on someone at large conference but I can have an impact on folks in my own body. One of the things we are saying is that singing is other-centered. It can be meaningful for you as well but your signing can be edifying for others.

But generally, we tend to be a bit selfish when it comes to worship. We want a certain style of music, a certain volume, just the right tempo and mix of songs that we like. Music is emotional and therefore very personal. But we run into great danger when we seek our own happiness in worship. You want to think not what is best for me, but what is best for the body.

There’s a secular study on happiness that relates to this principle. The core discovery, which should not be surprising to believers, is that when you aim for happiness, you will probably miss it. But if you aim at the deeper meaning of serving others, you get joy and happiness thrown in.<sup>5</sup> This is the essence of what congregational singing is meant to be.

That’s all well and good, but what if I truly can’t sing? What if birds fly away and little babies scream in pain when I try to sing? What then? For that, I have a quote from R.C. Maurer who said, “Just because you can’t sing doesn’t mean you can’t sing.” RC is my son, Ryan. He didn’t actually say this but at his wedding reception, he did say, “Just because you can’t dance doesn’t mean you can’t dance.” Both are true, but especially signing. Just because you can’t sing doesn’t mean you can’t sing. I can sing but I wish I could sing even better. I’ll never

forget the first time I heard Josh Groban sing. His music not my cup of tea but the man has the voice of an angel. There is no exception clause in this verse that would allow for imperfect voices.

The importance of this part of worship and mutual edification is part of the reason we decided to add worship responsibilities to the job description for the second staff. Most of his responsibilities will still be related to discipleship but about 30% will be directed to worship. There are several reasons for this. One, worship is discipleship. As I have been saying all morning, worship is one anothering. I've lost track of the number of times that the worship team finished and I felt like it was already time to go home. I felt encouraged, sometimes convicted and like the Holy Spirit had given us a special taste of his presence and the truth of his word. That's what worship through music can do for a local body.

The other reason is just practical. The worship leaders put in a lot of time and they have all agreed that it would be helpful for them and for the church to have someone spending more time in this area of ministry than they are able to give. It is the same reason we began paying Julie Halverson to do the bookkeeping and Debbie Aloisi to do administrative duties. We needed more help in these areas than volunteers are able to give. They both do such an amazing job, by the way. We are fortunate to have both of them. They are very part time but are a big help to our church. In the same way, we began to see the need for more consistency and concentrated time spent in worship. We pray that the person who fills this spot will not just coordinate worship duties but will help us grow deeper in this area and others.

Some of you might be worried that our worship will change a lot and will go all crazy with a dark stage and fog machines. Can I be blunt? Over my dead body. No matter what, our worship will always be about the horizontal dimension of addressing one another and the vertical dimension of singing and making melody to the Lord in our hearts. This clear pattern laid out in chapter five will always be the core of our worship. We will still be mostly led by volunteers. We hope that this new pastor will add a helpful instrumental and vocal dimension to our congregational singing, but he's not going to run the show. We will make improvements if needed but our worship will not be much different than it is right now.

We don't want Grace Church to be known for its worship. We want Grace Church to be known for its signing. We want heart felt worship that is fully God centered. We want your worship to be Holy Spirit driven and Holy Spirit filled. Don't forget that congregational singing as Paul described it is part of what it means to be filled by the Spirit. Singing doesn't automatically make you filled with the Spirit, but I can guarantee you that being filled with the Spirit will make you want to sing.

**Rich Maurer**  
**January 14, 2018**

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<sup>1</sup><http://s3.amazonaws.com/files.austinstoneworship/attachments/000/000/340/original/aa5e9982ecae029792e17a17a62208d5>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-the-king-of-love-my-shepherd-is>

<sup>3</sup> [http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/The\\_King\\_of\\_Love\\_My\\_Shepherd\\_Is/midi/](http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/The_King_of_Love_My_Shepherd_Is/midi/)

<sup>4</sup> <http://thomrainer.com/2017/02/congregational-singing-keith-kristyn-getty-rainer-leadership-306/>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tomrath.org/meaning-matters-more-than-happiness/>