

Seven Biblical Reasons Why Singing Matters

Have you ever wondered why God desires for His people to sing? What role should singing play in the life of a Christian? What is it about worshiping through song that is important to God? You may not know it, but God has already answered these questions in the Bible.

1. When you sing, you obey.

Singing isn't an option in Scripture, it's a command: "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).

"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).

God's people are more than just invited to sing; we are *commanded* to sing. When we sing, we're doing what God asks of us.

2. When you sing, you dig deep roots in the Word.

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly...singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." (Colossians 3:16).

The Apostle Paul lays out this exhortation to let God's Word dwell in us richly, and then he tells us how to live out that command. The first means, of course, is teaching. But the second is singing. Singing is one of the two chief ways in which God's Word dwells in us richly. And as we observed in the last point, singing is a command. But this command comes with a promise: as we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs together, we are promised that the Word of Christ will dwell in us richly, which is what we should crave as believers.

Our singing is more than a warm-up for the sermon or a filler in the service. Colossians 3:16 is clearly laying out for us that singing stands alongside preaching as one of the two great ways that God has ordained for His Word to dwell richly in each one of us. C.J. Mahaney calls church singing "take-home theology," because the best songs we sing together serve as a three-minute, easily memorizable, deeply biblical summary of important truths from Scripture. Consider "In Christ Alone." There, in an easily memorizable form, we are presented with a thorough theology of the cross of Jesus Christ with clear and practical applications that we can use for our lives.

3. When you sing, you build up others.

First, you build up fellow believers when you sing. Note specifically in Ephesians 5:19 that it says: "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." We

see the same thing in Colossians 3:13-16: the exhortation to sing comes on the heels of bearing with one another (v. 13a), forgiving one another (v. 13b), putting on love (v. 14), being at peace as one united body of Christ (v. 15), and teaching God's Word to one another (v. 16). When we do what the Bible says and sing together as a church family, we are hearing confessions of faith all around us. We are hearing hundreds join with us and sing, "In Christ alone, my hope is found!"

Also know that as you sing, you are helping unbelievers. In Psalm 105:1-2, the Lord is calling the Israelites to be a light to the nations, and to do this He tells them: "Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wondrous works!" Think of the impact on a person who doesn't know Christ hearing those hundreds of confessions of faith as we sing together. This is why pastor Tim Keller says in *Worship by the Book*: "Good corporate worship will naturally be evangelistic" (219).

4. When you sing, you make war.

Chances are you haven't connected singing and warfare together, but it is a theme visible in Scripture. In Colossians 3, Paul is challenging the Colossians to literally put to death the sin in their lives. So all the commands to love and peace and forgiveness and teaching and singing are attitudes and habits of the believer that will kill sin.

We see the same thing in Ephesians 5: the command to address one another in song comes right on the heels of "[make] the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). And this context makes total sense: what posture must be more hated by the evil one than the posture of a believer who is singing? I can't think of many stances you can take that identify you with Christ and against Satan more than eyes, heart, mind, and voice lifted to heaven in song. It's very hard to lie, be greedy, or look at something inappropriate when you are "singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart" (Ephesians 5:19). Simply put, a heart that's doing that will not easily give in to temptation. A singing heart is a heart at war with the work of the evil one and the power of sin.

5. When you sing, you are spiritually strengthened for trial.

Often we think only of singing when we're happy and times are good, but singing in times of trials is powerfully recorded in Acts 16. Paul and Silas were unjustly imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel, and what did they do while they were in prison? Sing! (Acts 16:25) And this truth is confirmed in the lives of persecuted believers throughout history. Hear the words of one pastor recently imprisoned for his faith: "When we were in prison, we sang almost every day because Christ was alive in us. They put chains on our hands and feet. They chained us to add to our grief, yet we discovered that chains are splendid musical instruments. When we clanged them together in rhythm, we could sing!" Our persecuted brothers are modeling for us the example of Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Singing strengthens us and helps us persevere in the face of trial. If it can strengthen persecuted brothers and sisters, what can it do for you? Even in suffering, sing!

6. When you sing, you walk a God-designed pathway to joy.

Here is what the Psalms tell us about singing:

“Let all who take refuge in You rejoice; let them ever sing for joy and spread Your protection over them, that those who love Your name may exult in You” (Psalm 5:11).

“I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High” (Psalm 9:2).

“Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Your righteousness” (Psalm 51:14).

“I will sing of Your strength; I will sing aloud of Your steadfast love in the morning. For You have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress” (Psalm 59:16).

As you study Scripture on this point, you’ll notice that sometimes singing gives birth to joy and sometimes joy gives birth to singing. But repeatedly in Scripture, joy and singing are bound together. You can’t study one of these biblical themes without encountering the other. If you struggle for joy...sing. If you *are* joyful...sing. In God’s perfect design and understanding of the human condition, He has bound joy and singing together for the good of His people.

7. When you sing, you glorify God.

True obedience, deep roots in the Word, building up others, making war against Satan and sin, persevering, finding joy in God... All these things bring glory to God, which is each person’s chief goal and purpose. Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 proclaim this simply but powerfully, telling us to sing “to God” and “to the Lord” because He is the object of our praise. Ephesians 5:19 says, “singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.” It is to Him and about Him that we sing!

Singing has such a unique way of bringing your heart, soul, mind, and strength together to focus entirely and completely on God. In an age of distraction, singing grabs the attention of all our senses and focuses us on God. In Revelation 7:9–10, the Apostle John describes a glimpse of eternity with a great multitude from every tribe, people, and language singing before the Lamb, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Eternity awaits. On that day, will you be one of the great multitude that no one can number, singing the song of the Lamb, singing His praises? I hope you’ll be there, singing with me the song of our Savior Jesus Christ.

—The Rev. Tom Olson