

SUNDAY ARTICLE

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Your Church Needs You to Sing

Nick Aufenkamp

Your brothers and sisters in your local church need you. They need you to show up. They need you to be engaged. And, perhaps more than many of us realise, they need you to sing.

Congregational singing can be polarising. For some people, singing is their favourite part of the church's gathering. Others prefer to arrive on Sunday mornings just as the worship team is wrapping up and the sermon is about to begin.

For those in the latter category, perhaps you're highly self-conscious about your lack of ability to carry a tune, or maybe you don't jibe with the style of music your church's hipster music director tends to choose.

Whatever the reason, I want you to hear that your church suffers when your voice is silent.

Get to the Heart

The Bible is full of singing and songs. It wouldn't surprise me in the least if God's divine speech, by which He spoke the world into existence, sounded more like a song than a seminar. Adam's first words to Eve are beautifully poetic (Genesis 2:23).

The largest book in the Bible is a collection of songs. At least once, if not more often, the apostle Paul quotes or crafts what seems to be an early Christian hymn (Colossians 1:15–20). And Jesus himself sang (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

And for good reason: singing uniquely engages our heads and our hearts, our intellect and our affections. That's basically what Paul says in Colossians 3:16, where he connects "the word of Christ dwell[ing] in you richly" with "singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Good songs take the truths hovering in our heads and sink them down for our hearts to dwell on.

We experience the power of singing in songs like Horatio Spafford's famous "It Is Well with My Soul." As we sing the third verse, we cannot help but feel the solemnity of the line, "My sin – oh, the bliss of this glorious thought – my sin not in part but the whole..." Yet suddenly the minors of the first half of the verse give way to the bright major chords of the second half, and we confidently declare, "...is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more: praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!" And as we sing, we feel the major lift of the music raise our hearts to soar in proportion with the glory of that truth.

Sure, we could speak the lyrics, and the truth in them should still move us to worship. But the elements of rhythm and melody arrest our affections in transformative ways not typical of speech alone.

Teach and Admonish

But congregational singing isn't only about you and engaging your emotions. It is that, but there is more. In Colossians 3:16, Paul

also instructs the church to continue "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom," and he implies that congregational singing is one of the means of doing so. In Ephesians 5:19, Paul makes the implication of Colossians 3:16 explicit, telling the church to "[address] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Singing is vital to the edification of the church. And it's not enough that just a few people sing – Paul is telling *you* to sing for the benefit of your brothers and sisters. But how does your voice benefit your church – especially if your singing voice sounds like a dog's howl?

... singing uniquely engages our heads and our hearts, our intellect and our affections.

The power of your participation in congregational singing is not in the quality of your tone but in your voice's testimony to God's faithfulness. Your participation in singing signifies to all those around you that you love Jesus and trust his gospel. By heartily singing, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!" you are exhorting those around you to lay hold of that precious truth. By singing of your sin and salvation, you are instructing your church, spouse, children, friends, and neighbours in gospel truth.

Declare His Faithfulness

What about when you don't feel like singing, though? When your soul is downcast, and your faith is diminished? These are the times when your church needs your voice the most.

... your singing becomes a forceful testimony to the faithfulness of God.

The gospel is on full display in our weakness. When all is going well for you, and life is sailing smoothly along, you should sing – but it's less surprising when you do. When all is going well, it is surprising when you *don't* sing.

But when life is falling apart, and trials threaten your security, *that* is when your singing becomes a forceful testimony to the faithfulness of God.

In your church, the most prominent leaders of congregational song may be up front on a platform. But the most prominent leaders aren't always the most powerful leaders. In fact, in my years as a worship pastor, I have found that the most powerful leaders of congregational worship are almost always found in the pews:

- The expecting mother who suffered a devastating miscarriage the day before, but through the tears sings out, "In Christ alone my hope is found; he is my light, my strength, my song."
- The young professional who, because of his Christian convictions on sexuality, was fired from his dream job on Friday, but who arrives

on Sunday and belts out, "How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

- The divorced woman, battling loneliness and depression, who declares, "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him – how I've proved him o'er and o'er."
- The 76-year-old husband and wife who recently buried their youngest daughter and two granddaughters, but still sit in the second row on Sunday morning – as they have for the past forty years – and cry out, "He will hold me fast. He will hold me fast. For my Saviour loves me so. He will hold me fast."

These are the folks whose singing can spur on my faith as much as any sermon. Their act of declaring the faithfulness of God through

their participation in the church's songs makes me love the truth we are singing with affections that I could never muster if I were singing on my own. The songs of suffering saints speak life to my soul.

So, when the music starts this weekend, don't underestimate what happens as you sing. You are engaging your heart, teaching those around you (and receiving teaching), and declaring God's faithfulness. The simple act of lifting your voice in song may well be the most significant way you serve your church this Sunday.



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Source: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/your-church-needs-you-to-sing>

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