



How sweetly do we Sing?

I know this article will stress some of your traditional thoughts, and all the more dangerously so, as it will touch some of our sacred emotional cows. I'd like to apologize for stressing your minds and hearts, except I can't bring myself to forbear in that I believe there are some critical issues facing the gathering of the saints. So with that intro, I would like to launch out into another concern I believe I'm hearing in the Spirit. You must judge if it is "from the Lord."

When we gather we sing...Why? I know, we are all "used" to singing when we get together. We read the saints did so in the early Church, so surely we are on solid ground in continuing the tradition they began, and of course we know that Israel as a nation often gathered to sing the high praises of Yahweh. Sooo, is our singing just automatically "Spirit led?" Or could we, once again, be following traditional patterns, handed down to us by "the clergy," which in fact, rather than draw us deeply into Jesus, tend to become something that is far short of the Spirit's intentions for our singing when we gather?

For example...why do we most often "begin" our times with singing? Where do we see this pattern among the early Churches? I know we've always been taught this is "the way" to begin a worship service, but I thought we were putting behind us "services" and learning to gather together unto Him. I'm not suggesting it would be wrong to start a gathering time with singing, but are we sure He is leading us to "always" start our gatherings with song? Don't we at least want to ask Him each time we gather, rather than just do it because that's the way we've always done it?

Do we always have to parrot someone's favorite CD, or could the Spirit of Jesus, if we drew deeply into Him, bring forth spiritual songs, hymns, and psalms, as Paul seems to reference in Ephesians 5:19? I'm not suggesting we should never use the CD's, or enjoy the synthesizer we have grown so attached to, and give up the folksy sound of Joe or Mary's guitar, but...are we sure these are always helps, and not indirectly hindrances, by virtue of our dependence upon them? Sometimes it's great to begin with a worshipful CD, but do we want to get stuck in any one approach to singing?

I know, I know, I'm stepping on the toes of some very sacred cows now. But bear with me. I'm not suggesting all of these methods are wrong, but I'm asking you to consider if they are the highest forms of music and song among the saints?

Let me ask another question? Is there a heavenly sound, that if it comes forth in our gatherings will call all into the high praises of God? If there is would not this sound be a sound that we would all respond favorably to, instead of some of us being wearied or offended by the noisy banging of drums, clashing symbols, and whining guitars. I know, I know, Israel used many of these instruments, but we are not Old Testament Israel, our gatherings are a far more intimate gatherings unto Jesus than they ever dreamed of. Their prophets longed for our day. I'm not so certain our look should be backwards, when it comes to discerning the Spirit's call to song and praise, as it should be upwards and

deeper, because of our ability to search the deep things of Jesus.

Please understand I'm not suggesting there is no place for Christian entertaining music. Even I would fear going to that place that angels themselves would fear to tread. I'm just concerned that our gathering times can all too easily become "I like this kind of music. It ministers to me, so it's going to minister to all of you..." I know none of us approach this ministry with so crass an attitude, but I believe we unwittingly bring this into our times of gathering. Can we not find an expression of praise in song that all of our spirits will warm to, that draws all, not just some, into the presence of Jesus. Must some of us be tormented while others are blessed? Should it not be one of our goals, when it comes to singing, to find a style and approach we share agreement with, and most especially "agreement with the Lord?" Do we have to give up on the hope of finding such an approach, just because we all have such diverse tastes and preferences? Is it not possible, if we talk with one another, ask Jesus deeply to guide us, and wait on Him for His leading, that we could find a way in through praise that would draw us all to Him? Certainly we could never have even dreamed of such a discussion or hope, when we gathered in assemblies of 100's and 1000's, but now we are 10's and 20's. Is it not possible we could find a greater degree of human and spiritual agreement?

I know this is a tall order, and one not easily attained. Sooo, here's my suggestion. It is a radical one, but I share it anyway for you to pray about. Why can't we agree to begin our formal times of gathering without singing, at least once in awhile? Why can't we put aside the CD's, the synthesizers, and the guitars, at least at the beginning, and see, just see, if we draw deeply into Him, if He will not begin to sing over us as He says He will in Hebrews 2:12. Have you ever heard Jesus do what He promises He will do in Hebrews 2:12? Or have you only known to parrot someone else's song to Him. We must not miss this great joy. We must not miss the great joy of hearing Jesus sing a song within us and then bid us to sing it to those we are gathered with. I know not all of us have great voices, but I believe you will experience, that if we are truly joined to Him and abiding in His Spirit when we sing in this manner we will not be all that distracted by a scratchy voice or some tone challenged individual. I'm not suggesting we never start with music and song, but at times we might do well to move deeply into the Spirit without the help of music.

I believe the Lord has it in His heart to adjust this entire area. I know Hebrews 2:12 connected to Ephesians 5:19 could be considered a controversial connection, but I truly believe the writer of Hebrews (probably Barnabas or Apollos, both who were close companions of Paul's) and Paul in Ephesians, are being led by the Spirit to look back at the Psalms and ask the question: "What was David really doing in the Psalms?" I'm convinced in the Spirit that what David was doing was sitting in the presence of the Messiah and listening to the Messiah sing praise to the Father, and then simply penning and singing what he was hearing Jesus singing. Now, says Paul, under the ministry of the Spirit of Jesus in every new covenant believer, we are given the privilege and joy of hearing the Messiah ourselves, and singing praises to the Father in the presence of one another. What an amazing privilege, and how terribly sad that the church has so long limited itself to a few very gifted and talented brothers and sisters who can play instruments, sing with a melodious voice, and stand with poise before the people, doing what the people themselves could be doing if we didn't relegate it to the professional clergy. I'm not chastising the professional clergy per se, though I see no place for them under the new covenant, but more I'm hearing the Lord calling the body to lift up their spirits before the Lord, hear Him sing once again, and then sing it forth to His bride. Oh my gosh...if we could just get a vision for this what a new thing would spring forth among us.

In this context we would see no reason to always begin our times together in song, but to wait before the Lord and release the song at any point we hear Him begin to sing and instruct us to harmonize with Him. I truly believe this will rid us of human driven ritual, and once again turn our times over to Jesus Himself. He knows so well how to edify and build us up, if we will just trust Him for it and release Him to do so. Won't it be exciting??

I know this is scary, but I also know you have wondered about these various issues yourselves. The reason I know you have, is because I know you have read your bibles and wondered some of these same things, and I believe, if you think back about it, you have heard Jesus pose some of the same questions to your spirit. Well, at any rate I hope you've heard it. If so, it will make swallowing this challenging discourse a bit easier.

At least it just possibly might be a healthy discussion for each of us to entertain in our respective fellowships, if not here in this forum. You decide...

So sing on saints, sing unto the Lord a "new song..," and some old ones too.