



WHY DO WE SING THE SONGS WE SING?

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THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF SONG SELECTION

Song selection for worship is a pastoral ministry of the Word. It is a big deal which words are placed in the mouth of our congregation through which we sing praise to God and edify one another. Musical worship serves the greater purpose of our liturgy as we walk through the Gospel arc and anticipate and respond to the preached Word (see last month's article *The Gospel Flow of Biblical Worship*). Songs have a way of continuing to minister to us throughout the week and throughout our lives. Good lyrics matched with good melodies stick with us. They guide us, teach us, and comfort us. Of course, God is the real Guide, Teacher, and Comforter. But he has long been pleased to provide his people with songs as a vehicle of his ministry. Music is one of the best tools for delighting in and storing up God's word in our hearts (Psalm 119:11, 16) that we might be transformed into all-of-life worshippers (Rom. 12:1-2). So, we should be intentional and discerning of the songs we sing while guarding against the temptation to become overly critical, recognizing the artfulness of the medium of music.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD CONGREGATIONAL SONG

Biblically Robust - The song is filled with biblical terms, phrases, and imagery, and the overall message is consistent with the truths of Scripture.

Theologically Clear - The song poetically expresses Christian theology in a way that is clear, understandable, and accurate.

Lyrically Rich - The lyrics are artfully vivid, soulfully expressive, and have depth, whether the words are many or few.

Musically Moving - The musical tone matches the lyrical tone, and responsibly engages the emotions (joy, adoration, lament, repentance, Gospel embrace).

Singable - Most of the notes are in a comfortable range for most of the congregation (low A-high D), so that men, women, *and children* can participate.

Expansive - High points in the song may stretch vocal ability, but this is intentional and not wearisome.

Simple - The lyrics, rhythm, and melody are well crafted and simple enough to catch on to after one or two exposures.

Memorable - And yet the song is interesting, unique, and cohesive that it may be memorable, serving the transformative impact of a biblically rich song.