

Worship Killers

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1. List three hymns that you don't like to see announced in worship.
2. Why do you not like to see these hymns announced?
3. What are some other things that make a hymn ineffective for you?

In our first lesson, we outlined the path that all of us must take to worship. It's a more complex process than we often realize. As with any complex process, worship does not always happen the way that it should. Every one of the elements we described in that lesson can break down, short-circuiting our efforts to worship. If we want to please God, we need to eliminate these breakdowns from our worship lives, and in order to get rid of these worship killers, we need to understand them.

The first part of the path to worship is also the first part that can fail. It is quite possible for a congregation to be interested in worship, yet be prevented from worshipping by a deficient hymn. Of course, not all bad hymns are created equal. Some create more of a worship train wreck than others do. However, they can all damage the worship process. Although the ways bad hymns fail vary from hymn to hymn, generally they crater in one (or both) of two main ways: the idea is flawed, or the technique used to present the idea is flawed.

It would be impossible to worship God in spirit or in truth if the song that is sung teaches FALSE DOCTRINE. Consider the original second verse of "*To God Be the Glory*,"

*O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, to every believer the promise of God
The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives*

Do you see anything there you'd have trouble singing? There's a reason why we sing an altered version; the original teaches **FALSE DOCTRINE**. False doctrine will bring the worship of any thinking Christian to a screeching halt. Who can worship with something he knows God hates? Thankfully, we aren't commonly presented with obvious false doctrine in our worship services, even though many of our hymns are the product of denominational writers. Either the false doctrine has been corrected, as in this case, or it's veiled enough that we re-interpret the hymn and sing it anyway.

There are also songs in our books that are so difficult to sing that we have to concentrate so hard on hitting the right notes that we don't have time to think about the words or who we are singing to. How many basses in the church are skilled enough that they can worship while accurately singing the bass line to "A Mighty Fortress"? There are a few things you can try if a song is too difficult. We will discuss ways to deal with difficult songs in future lessons.

Other songs are hard to understand. It would be helpful if we had a dictionary with us when we sang some songs. Like "The Spacious Firmament"

The spacious firmament on high, with all the blue, ethereal sky,

And spangled heavens a shining frame their great Original proclaim

But it is important that we understand what we are saying, so learning to study the words before, during, and after we sing a song is extremely important.

We must never forget that a hymn is a teaching tool, in just the same way that a sermon or a bible class is a teaching tool. If our hymns and our singing fail to teach, we fail God!

Additionally, when song leaders continue to sing the same songs over and over or sing songs with the same content continually, it makes it difficult for the congregation to worship. We would all get bored if the preacher brought the same exact sermon or his sermons were only on the same topic. The same is true with our songs service.

But the congregation usually can't control what the song leader decides to sing. Assuming the song leader doesn't announce an unscriptural song, we must learn to worship fully from the heart with what ever song is sung. If the song leader announces your least favorite song in whole song book, do you simply decide not to worship until the next song? May It Never Be! We have to get through our dislike for the song (for whatever reason).

For example, two songs that I am not particularly fond of are "*Angry Words*" and "*Come unto Me*". I think the reason I don't like these songs is that they are usually led at a funeral pace procession tempo, and the bass part is less than stirring. However let's focus on the words for moment:

ANGRY WORDS

*Angry words O let them never from the tongue unbridled slip
May the hearts best impulse ever check them ere they soil the lip*

*Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far
For a moments reckless folly, thus to desolate and mar*

*Angry words are lightly spoken, bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred
Brightest links of life are spoken, by a single angry word.*

*Love one another, thus says the Savior
Children obey the Father's blest command*

COME UNTO ME

*O heart bowed down with sorrow, O eyes that long for sight
There's gladness in believing, In Jesus there is light*

*Divinest consolation, doth Christ the Healer give
Art thou in condemnation? Believe, repent and live*

*His peace is like a river, His love is like a song;
His yoke's a burden never, 'tis easy all day long*

*Come unto Me, All ye that labor, and are heavy laden and I will give you rest
For I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

When I stop and concentrate on the wonderful words of these songs a couple things come to mind. First, these songs are unique. How many other songs in our book come close to the thoughts

communicated in "*Angry Words*"? Or are there any passages in the bible that instill more comfort to the weary soul than the invitation of Jesus in *Matthew 11:28-30*? When I concentrate on these words I can overcome any tempo, any difficulties with parts. I can praise and glorify my God in heaven and I can communicate my thanksgiving to my brother or sister sitting next to me.

But what about other songs whose words or thoughts that may not be as stirring? What do you do if the song leader announces any of the following songs?

#802 – Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory
#376 – Joy to the World
#464 – O Come All Ye Faithful
#577 – Silent Night
#801 – America the Beautiful
#803 – America

Unless I have missed something, strictly speaking there is nothing unscriptural with any of these songs. But the fact that they have become so secular makes them difficult to worship to. If a song leader announces one of these songs, and the elders do not stop him (then you have to assume that they have determined the interruption to the worship would be worse than the singing of the song), and so we must make the best of the situation and worship God. So how do we do that? I am not saying that elders are always right and we must determine ourselves whether we are worshipping the Lord in truth. But if we choose not to sing – we must ask ourselves, are we doing not singing because we just don't like the song, because we find the song too hard to sing, or that we truly feel the song violates our conscience? If you look at the words to the songs mentioned above, you will notice that we often pray these same thoughts (that the Lord might bless this nation, thanking Him for sending Jesus to this world, etc...) If the song is difficult – sing the melody forget singing the bass or tenor part. If the song is lead slow – concentrate on the words. If the song is secular but scriptural – again, focus on the words as if you were praying these same thoughts. I'm not saying it is easy – but the outcome might be well worth it.

Other songs that are difficult (for me) are "*Whosoever Meaneth Me*" (#778) in which the chorus is to the tune of the theme to Hogan's Hero's and "*Pray All the Time*" (#537), set to the tune of "On Top of Old Smokey". Again, what can we do when secular thoughts come crashing into our minds during our worship to God?

1. How has this lesson changed your attitude toward hymns?
2. If you were about to be executed for your faith in Christ, what hymn would you choose to sing beforehand? Why?
3. List five of your favorite hymns.
4. Why are these hymns among your favorites?
5. What do you think a good hymn should accomplish?
6. According to Colossians 3:16, what are the two things a hymn must do?
7. Should we judge the content of hymns by a different standard than we judge the content of a sermon or a Bible study? Why or why not?

8. Why should a hymn be fresh as well as Scriptural?
9. What happens when a hymn is not emotionally powerful?
10. How is a hymn intuitive? Why is this important?
11. Name two ways that a hymn can be hard to understand.

Applying Hymns as Tools for Worship.

1. Based on what you have seen in this lesson, is there such a thing as an objectively good hymn?
2. If you were to prepare a six-hymn song service based around the Crucifixion. What songs would you choose? Defend your choices.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY (#682)

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes, (*later versions use "OBEYS"*)
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.
(Refrain)

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.
(Refrain)

1. How does this song make you feel when you sing it?
2. What are some of the "great things" that God has done for you?
3. In what things do you "give God the glory"?
4. What is wrong with the 2nd verse as it was originally written? Do later versions of this song correct this? How?
5. What is the last verse talking about?

He Carried My Sorrows

*#671 in Hymns for Worship (Revised)
For use with Lesson 3*

He carried my sorrows,
He bore my grief's,
Was pierced for transgression,
Afflicted for peace.

Chorus:

He knew by His stripes I am healed,
Through His blood, I can kneel,
For by His oppression,
I worship my King.

He suffered in anguish,
He writhed in pain,
Was smitten, forsaken,
Abandoned, and slain.

Despised and rejected,
He knew no sin,
Was crushed for His people,
No violence within.

(Chorus)

My heart mourns His chastening,
My tears still fall,
My sin is the reason
He gave me His all.

(Chorus)

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Understanding “He Carried My Sorrows.”

1. What text does this hymn paraphrase?
2. How exact does this paraphrase appear when compared to “Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah?”
3. What are some disadvantages of using a less exact paraphrase?
4. What are some advantages to using a less exact paraphrase?
5. Why is this hymn effective in worship?

Note: Material for this class was gathered from a variety of study sources. “Worship In Song” by Jimmy Jividen, “Singing Unto the Lord” by Mike Riley; “Singing” by Kevin Cauley