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## Sing With Understanding

### Introduction.

It should thrill our soul to join with the children of God in singing His praises! (Revelation 19:1, 4-6). We see, however, so many who claim to be Christians who are living contrary to the words of the songs we offer before our heavenly Father in praise. Do we really mean what we sing? Let's consider the following list of songs, what do they mean to you?:

"Soldiers Of Christ, Arise" (#585) \_\_\_\_\_

"Seeking The Lost" (#571) \_\_\_\_\_

"We'll Work Till Jesus Comes" (#743) \_\_\_\_\_

"Tell Me The Old, Old Story" (#622) \_\_\_\_\_

"Have Thine Own Way, Lord" (#197) \_\_\_\_\_

"If Jesus Goes With Me" (#321) \_\_\_\_\_

"O Lord, Our Lord" (#485/486) \_\_\_\_\_

"More About Jesus Would I Know" (#415) \_\_\_\_\_

(Acts 17: 11; 2 Timothy 2: 15).

"Give Me The Bible" (#154) \_\_\_\_\_

"I'm Not Ashamed To Own My Lord" (#298) \_\_\_\_\_

(cf. Matthew 26:57-58,69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-17).

"Take The World, But Give Me Jesus" (#616/617) \_\_\_\_\_

"If We Never Meet Again This Side Of Heaven" (#323) \_\_\_\_\_

### Conclusion

Brethren, let us truly "mean what we sing" as we sing praises unto our God. How wonderful it will be "When All Of God's Singers Get Home." To be certain we are among them, let us truly live as

we sincerely sing and mean the words to, "Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!" (Psalm 47:6-7; Psalm 148:1-14; cf. Revelation 19:1,4-6).

As we have said a number of times, the songs we sing do two major things; (1) Worship God, and (2) they must teach and admonish. In order for our songs of praises to teach, we must understand what we are singing (1 Cor 14:15). What good does it do us to sing of the "O Beulah Land" if I have no idea what it is or what it means (my brother dated a girl named Beulah one time but I doubt that is what that song means). Without knowing that this word means "to marry" and comes from Isa 62:4 and speaks of the intimate relationship between God and Israel and the benefits enjoyed by Israel, I would not be taught by this song.

So it is critical that we learn to study the songs we sing, to look deeply into their meaning to gain as much benefit, encouragement, or admonishment as possible from what the writer is trying to tell us. And then once we have that knowledge, the songs take on a deeper meaning, and our singing moves to another level and that emotion is felt by those around us and they too are encouraged and taught by our praise to God.

Unfortunately we are not always given a lot of time to study each song before we sing them. We come across words or phrases that are foreign to us and before you know it we move on to the next song or the next phase of our worship together (the sermon or the Lord's Supper or prayer). So what do we do? Sadly, most of the time, we don't do anything. We just move on and forget it. Like reading a book and you come across a word that you don't know, instead of stopping to look it up in the dictionary, we just keep on reading. We should be diligent and write down those things we don't understand in our songs and take the time to study. Surely you know we will sing that song again, and unless we take the time to understand these words or phrases, we still will not understand what we are singing unless we make the effort. Unless we understand the songs we sing we can neither praise God nor teach our brethren – WE FAIL TO WORSHIP! Yes we might be singing, but if we are not praising God or teaching our brethren (because we don't understand what we are saying), how can we call that worship?

Here are several phrases or words in our song book that we do not use everyday. Please look at these songs and look up the words or phrases and let's discuss what they mean:

1. **"Higher Ground"** (#234) – What does "heaven's table-land" refer to?
2. **"The Great Physician"** (#634) - This songs speaks of the "sweetest note in seraph song". To what does it refer? (Gen 3:24; Psa 80:1; Isa 6:2,6)
3. **"Jesus Rose of Sharon"** (#363) – Is this a scriptural song to sing? To what does it refer? What scriptures point to this phrase? In what poetic way is Jesus the Rose of Sharon? (Song 2:1; Isa 35:2)
4. **"Just Over In the Gloryland"** (#383, #934) – This song as well as a host of others encourage us to shout and sing "hosannas". Exactly what are we shouting and singing? (Psa 118:26; Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9-10)

5. **“Mansions Over the Hilltop”** (#829) – We already talked about this song being a little materialistic, but what is the reference to the “prophet with a pillow of stone”? (Gen 28:10-19)
6. **“Wonderful Love of Jesus”** (#790) – This beautiful song begins by saying “in vain in high and holy lays”. This phrase is not one we normally use, so what does it mean?
7. **“Ivory Palaces”** (#343) – This song has several phrases that are strange to us, like “aloes had a part” (John 19:39), “Cassia”,
8. **“O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing”** (#500) – Exactly what is an Ebenezer, and why am I raising it? (1 Sam 7:10-12)
9. **“Give Me the Bible”** (# 154) – What is gilding, and what does it represent? (Psa 116:15; Rev 14:13)
10. **“Tis Midnight on Olive’s Brow”** (#709) – Two phrases are in this song that may not be familiar to us: “Olive’s Brow” and “ether plains” – what is referenced by these phrases?
11. **“Night with Ebon Pinion”** (#452) – We often sing this song, but seldom pay attention to the footnotes at the bottom of the page. What is an Ebon Pinion and what is the writer trying to get us to see?
12. **“Apple of My Eye”** (#843) – This is a phrase that we do hear sometimes, but maybe we don’t really know what it means, or maybe we do, but do we really mean it when we sing it? What does it mean?
13. **“The Spacious Firmament on High”** (#666) – Again, this song is a beautiful song, but has several words that are not often used today. “Ethereal”, “Orb”
14. **“Man of Sorrows”** (#203) – Too many songs to mention contain the words “Hallelujah”, “Alleluia”, “Allelujah”. What do these words mean?
15. **“Lily of the Valley”** (#274) – What exactly is the Lily of the Valley? And the “Morning Star”
16. **“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”** (#80) – An unusual word is chosen by the writer in this hymn to describe the wonder of the cross “trysting-place”. What does this mean?

The purpose of this practice is to get us used to looking things up in our songs and not to take them for granted? How many of us have sung “in vain in high in holy lay” and not known that the word “lay” is an old word for “song” and that the writer is describing our feeble attempts to praise adequately and worthily the Christ in spiritual songs.

*Note: Material for this class was gathered from a variety of study sources. “Reflections On Our Hymns” by Max Wheeler, “Dictionary of Word” by Dan K. Buselmeier, “Do We Mean What We Sing?” by Mike Riley, “Singing with Understanding” by Mike Riley*

## **I Come To The Garden Alone (#805)**

### **Read John 20:11-18**

*I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses; And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own  
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known.*

*He speaks and the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing  
And the melody that He gave to me Within my heart is ringing*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him though the night around me be falling, but He bids me go, through  
the voice of woe, His voice to me is calling.*

1. What was going through Mary Magdalene's mind on the Sunday morning as she walked to the tomb?
2. What did she think happened to Jesus' body?
3. What was her emotional state at this point?
4. Describe the garden? What time of day was it? Close your eyes and imagine you were there, what was it like as you first entered Joseph's garden?
5. What happened within Mary's heart when Jesus spoke her name?
6. What did she forget (remember her emotional state from Friday evening to that morning – what was gone now)?
7. This was the greatest morning in the history of the world – and Mary was there, she spoke to the Master, He calmed her fears, her tears, her pain. What joy does she have now?