

Sing the Bible

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[0:00] If you've got a Bible, we're going to go to two places in the Bible. The first place is in the Old Testament, Psalm chapter 8. And then the second place is in the book of Ephesians in the New Testament, Ephesians 5.

Psalm 8. And I'm going to read the little, you'll often see in your psalms, you've got these little subscriptions in the psalms. I'm going to read that as well this morning because it's relevant to where we're going later on.

Psalm 8. For the director of music according to Getith, a psalm of David. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies. To silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them?

Human beings that you care for them. You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands and you put everything under their feet.

[1:27] All flocks and herds and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea and all that swim into the paths of the seas. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

Then flip forward to the book of Ephesians, the New Testament, Ephesians chapter 5. And just a short section there, verses 18 to 20.

The Apostle Paul writes and he says, This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Let's ask for God's help together. Gracious God, we come as people needing bread this morning. Heavenly bread.

The bread that comes from your word. And so won't you in your great mercy feed us? Won't you show us the truth of scripture? And won't you impress those truths upon our hearts so that we are changed by what we see?

[2:45] Let us see your son clearly. Let us see the glory of the gospel. And let us marvel at that, we pray. We ask for this help by your spirit, for Christ's sake. Amen. As you can hear, I've been struggling with a cold and cough and everything this week.

So hopefully I will be able to get through this without spluttering too much and putting stuff on those. You guys are in danger in the front few rows over here. But we are in a series on the doctrine of worship.

And in that series, we've been trying to think about what it is that we do when we come together and we gather on a Sunday. Maybe that's something you have thought about before. Maybe it's something you've never thought about before.

And we've tried to build up definitions in the first part of the series. And then we started to walk our way through individual elements, the things that make up a normal Christian worship service.

We've looked at reading scripture. We've looked at preaching scripture. We've looked at praying scripture. We've used that little mantra, read the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible.

[3:51] This morning, we're looking at sing the Bible. So that's kind of where we are. But then I want to just remind you of the sort of the categories we've been using to try and understand these things.

Because I think it helps us have building blocks or sort of drawers to put different parts and ideas about worship in. We've been talking about elements and forms and circumstances.

Now that's not stuff you're going to find in the Bible. That's what theologians and the Protestant Reformation came up with, of ways of thinking about how you think about what we do. So elements are the things, well, we've got really good warrant in the Bible that we need to do these things.

We know we're supposed to preach in worship. So that's an element. Forms are, well, how do we do that? What kind of preaching exactly? And we use the Bible there, but you aren't always going to get a one-size-fits-all answer there.

Circumstances are more expedient things that have to happen. Like, should we have a built-in, baptismal font, or one that we move? There's no verse that's going to tell you that sort of stuff.

[4:57] You've got to figure those sorts of things out. And so we've been using those three categories as we walk through the different elements. Now with each of the previous elements, our aim is not just to look at each activity in the abstract and say, well, you know, we've got to read, we've got to pray, we've got to preach.

But we wanted to always attach that read the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible, because we want what we do in worship to be both steered, that is governed by Scripture, but then also saturated with Scripture.

We know in Scripture that that is where God has spoken, and so we want all the different elements to be filled up with the content of Scripture. So it's steered and it's saturated by Scripture. Ligon Duncan, who teaches the doctrine of worship at Reformed Theological Seminary in the U.S., he says this in his little book on worship, he says, we are to sing the Bible.

This does not mean that we can only sing Psalms or sing only the language of Scripture, though this tremendous doxological resource of the church should not be overlooked. What we mean by sing the Bible is that our singing ought to be biblical, shot through with the language, the categories, and theology of the Bible.

It ought to reflect the themes and the proportion of the Bible, as well as its substance and its weightiness. So here's where we're going to go this morning. First, I want to make the case, like we've done with all the other ones, that congregational singing is an element of gathered worship.

[6:19] We should be doing it together when we gather for worship. And then I want us to see three reasons why we sing the Bible. So make the case for the element and then three reasons why we sing the Bible.

Here's the first one, singing as an element. Now singing, similar to prayer that we looked at last week, is all over Scripture. You don't get very far into the Bible before you start encountering songs.

Music and singing almost seems to be intrinsic to what it means to be human. As we saw last week, the longest book in the Bible, at least longest in terms of chapters, the book of Psalms, is a collection of songs.

The ancient hymn book of Israel. In the Old Testament, every single time something of significance happens, people sing. They sing to commemorate, they sing to praise, they sing to repent or lament.

Singing marks every major occasion as we go along in Scripture. So for example, when Israel gets rescued from slavery in Egypt, and they cross the Red Sea, and the army of Pharaoh is destroyed, when they get to the other side, they have a worship service, and they sing.

[7:31] Moses and Miriam lead them in singing a song. In Exodus 15, they sing of what the Lord has just done in rescuing them, and then they even sing in terms of expectation of where the Lord is going to take them onto the promised land.

If you go forward to a place like 2 Chronicles 7, King Solomon builds the temple, and he dedicates the temple that he's just built, and the presence of the Lord comes into the temple, and the people sing.

The Levites, who've been quite important in a lot of our previous sermons, in terms of teaching and reading Scripture, they're also the worship leaders. So they lead the people in singing.

They're like, I mean, Levites are not a bad name for a rock band, but that's what they do. They lead the worship. And they actually sing in that place. They sing a psalm. They sing a refrain from a psalm.

His love is good. He is good. His love endures forever. Israel also sings when they're broken, when they're despairing. The prophet Jeremiah is the chief composer of songs of lament in the Old Testament.

[8:35] He would have fit really well with Gen X in the grunge era, so like anger and frustration and dark themes. He's basically Kurt Cobain in the Old Testament. Some of you young kids are wearing the varnishers nowadays, and you have no idea what that even means, but we'll tell you about it.

So Israel sang in the good times. They sang in the bad times, but they sang. And you'll find that in pretty much every culture around the world, people singing.

But for Christians, it goes a step further, because God actually commands us in Scripture to positively, to sing, even if we can't sing to save our lives. And I'm not making eye contact with anyone while I say that.

But even if you can't sing particularly well, God commands us to sing. So listen to the Apostle Paul. Here's this Ephesians passage that we just read.

Ephesians 5, 18. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make, there's the command, sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[9:46] And there's almost a parallel passage to this in the book of Colossians, chapter 3, verse 16. Paul again. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

So, as Christians, then, the biblical call is there for us to express our gratitude and our joy in the Lord through singing. Now, alongside that sort of sheer prevalence of the example of singing, and even the command of singing that you see all the way through the Bible, there are other trajectories in Scripture that seem to point to the fact that gathered worship, the appropriate place for singing is gathered worship.

It's not the only place you can still sing worship songs in the shower, but gathered worship is the appropriate place for the singing of praise to God. So, here's a couple of those lines of thought in the Bible.

First of all, you have the Last Supper. Both Matthew and Mark in their Gospels, they record Jesus and the disciples singing a hymn together after breaking bread and celebrating Passover in that very intimate worship service in the upper room.

Another example is the second example in 1 Corinthians 14. We've looked at that in earlier parts of this series, where in that larger section of the book of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul is trying to better order the worship in the Corinthian church because it's a little bit out of control, and he starts to give all sorts of instructions about things they should be doing in worship, and in one place, he lists a series of activities that would happen when the church gathers, and in that list, he includes singing a hymn.

[11:29] It's the second example. A third example, perhaps the strongest indication that congregational singing is part of worship is the vision of the heavenly worship service that we get in the book of Revelation that we referred to earlier in the service.

So, in chapter 5 and in chapter 7, the Apostle John gets this vision of worship before the throne. The face of God with angelic beings and the gathered, redeemed people.

And what you see is a lot of congregational singing. They're all singing, and the verses of the songs that they're singing are even put out there. They sing, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

And then, even if you go beyond the New Testament to the earliest descriptions that we have of Christian worship, congregational singing is again a key part.

So, one really interesting finding that we have from antiquity is very early in the second century, we have a reference from a guy by the name of Pliny the Younger who was a Roman governor in Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey.

[12:41] He wasn't a Christian, but he writes to the emperor Trajan about Christians. And he gives us a fascinating insight into early Christian worship and what it looked like.

So, this is writing in 111 AD, so roughly 15 years or so after the end of the book of Revelation is written and the New Testament has finished being written. He says this, he says, This is the earliest non-Christian description that we have of a Christian worship service and it highlights congregational singing to Jesus Christ.

Now, putting all of that sort of data together, on the Lord's Day, when we gather, it is completely natural and in keeping with God's commands and the evidence of Scripture that we then sing together.

It's what we should be doing, at least one of the things we should be doing when we gather to worship. And as Paul says in Colossians, he starts, he says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

And then he says, Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. So, the source of congregational singing, the thing that steers, that saturates congregational singing is the word of Christ, Scripture.

[14:02] What God has already said to us in His revealed word. We sing the Bible. That's what we do. Now, before we move on to those three reasons for why we sing, I want to make a couple of practical remarks about congregational singing in view of these sorts of passages and the data of Scripture.

So, this is where we move from sort of element territory into form territory. A couple of things. Number one, congregational singing should be congregational.

That seems pretty obvious, but I'm not sure that churches always get this right. Many denominations in the past have gone through what has been called, you can find literature like this online, dubbed the worship wars.

That language was especially prominent in the last few decades of the 1900s and into the early 2000s. You had a lot of denominations. What basically happened was you had a lot of denominations in the Protestant world where hymn singing out of sort of traditional hymnals was slowly being replaced by singing of more contemporary songs and the use of overhead projectors.

Some of you have no idea what that is. Look for someone with gray in their hair and go and ask them about that afterwards, what an overhead projector is. But some people, people had to be on overhead projector duty. It was quite a thing. It was quite a challenge.

[15:21] But essentially, you had the struggle going on in the church. You had the struggle between older and younger generations over contemporary versus traditional songs. And it got pretty messy at points. People would write all sorts of stuff and people would fight and there would be nasty church council meetings going on.

You see, the struggle you're going to have when it comes to going to the Bible for guidance is that it's not going to tell you what genre of music you should use. Should contemporary worship songs sound like knockoffs of Coldplay like they do in lots of churches?

Should they have more of a kind of a gospel feel, soul gospel feel with an electric organ and everyone in robes swaying? Maybe more what's kind of popular now like a folk Americana thing going on with an acoustic guitar and flannel shirt.

Or should we just go back to singing psalms without any instrumentation like you'll find in historic Free Church of Scotland, Continuing Churches. If you go to the highlands of Scotland or to the outer Hebrides, those little islands on the edge of Scotland, you'll find, and it's quite an experience to stand in a room of people who have no fancy projection or anything and they just sing from their hearts the psalms of the Old Testament together and all harmonize together.

Should we be doing that? Scripture is not going to definitively answer that question for you. But whichever musical style you end up picking, and there can be all sorts of contextual reasons for that, it's got to be congregational.

[16:56] That is, everybody needs to be able to sing it. That's got to be the lowest common denominator. Everyone needs to actually be able to sing it, even the people who are not trained musicians need to be able to sing it.

The song shouldn't have sort of a ridiculous range where only Mariah Carey can sing in your church. They shouldn't have an uneven meter where everybody's kind of waiting for like when do we come in on the next verse because nobody knows.

The aim of the congregation is to sing together. It's congregational singing. It's not you in your shower singing. So that's the first thing. Second thing is congregational singing should be, I think, full of reverence.

So singing is part of the worship of our Creator God. And I think we need to think about that. As a result, I think it must come with a level of reverence which means I think we should be cautious of being a little bit too casual and informal when it comes to our singing.

One critique that is common about contemporary worship music and it's come over, you've probably heard this before in different circles where they talk about that contemporary worship music doesn't amount to much more than a bunch of people singing Jesus is My Boyfriend songs.

[18:09] And what people mean by that is that the language of the songs is stripped of a lot of its sort of formal reverence and replaced with a sort of informal casual language that you'd find in a Taylor Swift song.

Sorry, that's about the only contemporary singer I know, so that was the reference there. I understand that a desire for expressing intimacy in worship and I think that's important but I do think that as we do that we must be careful to maintain reverence.

When you read Revelation 5, you read Revelation 7, you have these powerful angelic beings throwing themselves on their face before the glory of God.

They prostrate down. I think we need reverence in worship. That's the second thing.

The third thing, congregational singing should be full of joy. When Moses and Miriam lead worship in Exodus 15 on the side of the Red Sea there, it's an outburst of joy because of God's saving work.

[19:17] We've been taken from slavery and have been made sons. We've been set free. That has got to issue in joy.

Our hearts should overflow with joy. Singing that's kind of just going through the motions doesn't fit with the gospel disposition. congregation. And so while there might be some contemporary forms of worship that denigrate reverence, I think there are some traditional forms of congregational singing that do a pretty good job at killing joy.

Where a worshiper coming into that service might think they're being reintroduced to slavery rather than being set free from slavery as they sing together. So there should be joy, an overflow of joy in singing.

Fourth thing, our congregational singing should have a range of biblical and theological content and themes. Now the most obvious case for this is the book of the Psalms. There is everything in there.

In 150 Psalms there is praise, there is lament, there are cries for justice, there are cries for healing, there are cries for protection, repentance, thanksgiving, meditation on the attributes of God, the full range of the human and the spiritual experiences contained in those Psalms.

[20:28] we should be singing that full range in worship, not just singing the same themes over and over again. We can't just be victory, victory, victory, victory, victory.

We have to sometimes be lament, lament, because that is the human experience this side of heaven. So let's bring all those things together, that's the basic case for congregational singing as an element for gathered worship.

Now fortunately singing is not generally something well it is generally something that most people enjoy, so you usually don't need to make a case for doing it, but I want to dig a little bit deeper into understanding why we sing, why the Bible commands us to sing scripture, three reasons.

Number one, God is an artist, we sing because God is an artist. I'll take you to that Old Testament song that we read, the Song of David, you saw that in the little subscription there, there are musical directions given, so it's clearly a song, Psalm chapter 8, it says, Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth, you have set your glory in the heavens, through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger, when I consider your heavens the work of your fingers the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them, you have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor, you made them rulers over the works of your hands, you put everything under their feet, all flocks and herds and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas, Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth, you can see that one's even kind of like a chorus verse, chorus structure there, and those first four verses they expound the glory and the majesty of the God who creates, the God who created the heaven with his fingers, so David starts with that refrain there,

Lord our Lord, our majestic is your name in all the earth, and then he says you've set the glory, your glory, above the heavens, and you think well David what has caused this outburst of praise in you, well he's reflecting on God's creating work, he's meditating on it, he's thinking about it, and the more he thinks about it, the more he gets the sense of awe and majesty in his soul, the more he's enthralled with the type of God that God would have to be to create the universe that he sees around him, and perhaps the most stunning thing that gets his head spinning is what he says in verse 3, when I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them, now by metaphorically speaking about God's fingers, it brings some very vivid pictures to mind, and some really important truths about God, so two things for example, number one, the image of fingers brings with it the idea of a potter, or a sculptor, shaping a masterpiece with his fingers, paints a picture of

[23 : 43] God as the ultimate artist, God whose canvas then is the heavens, and it speaks volumes about the nature of God as a God who crafts, a God who molds, a God who shapes, he's an artist, he's the supreme artist, Gene Edward Veith is an English professor or former English professor at Concordia University, it's a Christian university, he says this, he says, my eight-year-old granddaughter was showing me the shells she collected on the beach, we were marveling at the swirls and the shapes, the harmonious colors and the intricate pattern of the markings, and she exclaimed, God is an artist, and that's a fine theological observation for an eight-year-old or for someone of any age, it's also a fine aesthetic observation, the aesthetic form of a seashell has been related to the proportions and harmonies of classical art and architecture, what takes supreme talent, learning, rationality and skill on the part of a human artist is performed by a tiny non-rational animal, just spinning out its shell according to its nature and the nature of reality, aesthetic form is built into the very fabric of creation, and creation, whether of the universe or of a painting, a piece of music or a novel entails creativity, so yes,

God is an artist, human artists of just about every art form using just about every style used, sorry, style, used to claim that they were imitating nature, classical artists imitated nature by its order, romantic artists imitated nature by its wildness, but the point of reference for them all and the source of their standards as well as their subject matter was nature, that is objective reality, God is an artist, in fact, I think we can go even a step further and we can say not only is he an artist, but by virtue of his initial creating work, he is himself the source of all creativity, the source of all inspiration, the source of all beauty, the reason that we sort of value those features of our present reality, the reason that we find emotional attachment to great spectacles of art is because in his own being, God is a creator, artist, and his images stamped upon each one of us.

One of the biggest problems that our modern society has when it tells us that we live in a closed system where there is actually no God, there is just the material world that you can see, there is no high power, there is no higher force beyond that, beyond what can be kind of empirically deduced with rational science, one of the big problems that that worldview presents is that it really struggles to explain something like art, like the notion of beauty, like why music is so powerful.

Now some people have tried to get around that by proposing that, well, beauty is highly subjective. I mean, it's just a construct. You've heard people say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Sounds pretty plausible, right?

But it's not. We actually have multiple studies in the social sciences that suggest that beauty is anything but purely subjective. There is a reason why more tourists go on holiday to Cape Town than to Bloemfontein.

[27:14] And it's got nothing to do with the marketing. Now there is a fair bit of subjectivity in beauty, but there's also a lot of agreement across cultures, across ages, as to what qualifies as beautiful.

Another way people try to get around this is to say, well, it must be an evolutionary development in us as a species. Now I'm not a scientist, scientist, but it has been pointed out to me by people who espouse this kind of a view that evolutionary developments are supposed to aid in survival.

In other words, development is only going to take place if it's going to give that species a leg up in the food chain. How does beauty do that? How does beauty make us humans more viable than other animals?

Why is it that we regularly find things beautiful that appear to offer zero survival advantage or benefit, like a desert vista of rolling dunes without any water in sight?

Why are deadly animals that will eat us and tear us to pieces beautiful like a lion and a tiger? We have a hard time explaining beauty as something more than intrinsic luxury.

[28:29] Purely naturalist theory has a really difficult time explaining human delight in beauty in a way that shows no sort of survival advantage.

But you don't have a hard time if you have a God finger painting the stars into space with the skill of an expert artist.

You don't have a hard time if that God has built beauty into the very fabric of the universe. God is a supreme cosmic artist. Secondly, the comment about the fingers doesn't just tell us that he's an artist, it also tells us that he's a very big artist.

Beyond our understanding, beyond our comprehension, big. So he sets the solar system in place with his finger tips. Scale of his artworks beyond us.

God is an overwhelming sense of the enormity of this truth. The size and the scale is quite literally beyond our comprehension. We can't think about how big it is.

[29:38] But David says, God's finger set it all in place. The tiny littlest tips, smallest body part, set this gigantic universe in place. God is a God.

The obvious question is, how big is this God? How big is he? God is a God. So we've got God in the Bible, this picture of an all-consuming artistic God. Who not only creates his art on this gigantic platform, but he also is the source of all beauty and art and creative endeavor.

And so it would seem then to me to follow that it is wholly appropriate, and it's wholly appropriate to the authors of the Bible as well, that we would tap into that artistry as we respond to God in worship.

And so to sing, to use the art form that is music, we sing because the very nature of our God demands that we sing. We use a creative venture to worship a creative God.

See, if we just spoke about God, if we just talked, if we just had discussion groups and seminars with whiteboards and overhead projectors, PowerPoint for the younger, you could quickly end up just thinking that God, well, he's just a cerebral being.

[30 : 56] He's just about knowledge. He's just a brain, which would be completely false. God is about so much more, and our singing goes some way to recognizing that.

And that leads to the next point. We sing because truth needs to be experienced. If you think about it, God could have created us in a relatively dull, formless experience, existence, and he could have just rocked up and he could have just downloaded truths into our brain.

God is great and he is worthy of worship. And it would have been true because he is great and worthy of worship. It would have been the appropriate response, but he does weigh more than that. Here in Cape Don, for example, he sticks a giant flat-topped mountain at the head of a dramatic peninsula.

with peaks falling into the sea and sandy beaches all around it and deep blue waters. And then, after having done that, created that material world, then he says, I am the great God worthy of worship.

And this time it's equally true, but this time your heart knows that it's true, not just your head. In a similar way, we use music to connect our hearts with our head and what our head knows to be true.

[32 : 09] So I can stand up here and I can say, Jesus died for your sins. Or we could sing, see from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown? We sing that, and we sing that at the top of our voices with rousing music, and all of a sudden the head and the heart, they connect, they come together, the truth of the death of Jesus moves from upstairs to downstairs, and it takes residence in our hearts.

I think you can see the genius of God here in commanding us to sing. We are complex beings made up of intellect, will, emotions.

God knows that. And so he wants his truth to come to us in complex ways that speak directly to all the different complex parts that make up who we are. And so we sing because truth needs to be experienced.

And this leads to the last point. We sing as an overflow of our hearts. We sing as an external, artistic expression of something that is going on inside of us.

[33 : 21] So that parallel passage to the Ephesians passage that you find in Colossians chapter 3, Paul says, let the message of the word of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.

Through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. He's saying when the word of Christ, that is the gospel, the good news of what God has done in the life, death, and resurrection of his son Jesus Christ, when that word of Christ, when that gospel goes down deep into you, it does something to you.

It molds and it shapes your heart. It does a work of art actually itself. And it produces gratitude in you that then issues forth in song.

You see, back in Psalm 8 there, David looks at God's grandeur and he goes, what is mankind that you are mindful of them?

I.e., why do you even care about us, God? Why do you even care about us? Why do you care about us? We don't create, we don't create mountains and oceans of beauty, we create hatred and evil and conflict.

[34 : 38] God paints the landscape with his fingers, we wreck the landscape with our waste and our disregard for the planet and his creatures. So David says, why do you care about us?

God does care about us. God does care about us. He cares about us deeply.

The text says he crowns us with glory and honor and even though we continually scar this beautiful creation, he just keeps on creating. Instead, this time, he's not flinging stars into space with his fingertips.

This time he's doing a new artwork. This time, instead of painting the stars with his fingers on the canvas of the sky, he paints with the blood of his son on the canvas of our hearts.

The hearts that will repent and place their trust in him. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, our God is recreating our hearts.

[35 : 45] He does a work of art inside of each one of us who would come to him. It is completely appropriate that we use the medium of art and literally sing our hearts out.

Let what has happened on the inside come out. If you have been touched by the grace of God, if you have the blood of Christ applied to your heart, then there is a masterpiece of art inside of you that needs to come out.

you need to sing. You need to sing. You need to sing. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.

You need to sing. You need to sing. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace, foul I to the fountain fly, wash me savior or I die.

you need to sing. And when I think of God his son not sparing, sent him to die I scarce can take it in. That on the cross my burden gladly bearing he bled and died to take away my sin.

[36 : 58] You need to sing. I think you'll find that the more that you sing, the more that you belt out those truths and I don't care how tone deaf you might be, but the more you belt out those truths with conviction and with passion, the more those deep gospel truths will embed themselves in your heart.

The more your love for Christ will increase, the more your sense of his presence will grow. And so that is why we sing the Bible in gathered worship in church.

Let's pray together. Our gracious God and heavenly Father, you have done an incredible work of art in the hearts of those who have repented and trusted in Jesus Christ.

You have made the dead come alive. It is beyond anything we can do or create and so we marvel at that masterpiece, Lord.

And I pray for each one of us who have known that grace, that forgiveness, that you would produce joy in our hearts and that that joy would find its overflow in singing.

[38 : 12] Many other things, but in singing, that we would sing these great glorious gospel truths and feast and delight upon your love to us. Father, I pray for any person who is sitting here this morning who doesn't know that love, who has never repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus.

I want you to do a work of art in their hearts this morning. I want you to bring them to salvation, we pray. Bless us, make us a congregation that sings, we ask, and we ask this for Christ's sake.

Amen.