

Word-centered Worship

Sing the Word

What is the most important aspect of Sunday morning corporate worship?

God's Word.

“Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. **So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”**

- Ephesians 2:11-22

In other words, Jesus *is building* His Church and He is building it _____ His Word and _____ His Word.

So when we gather, the focus is the Word...

- Praying the Word (as Andrew unpacked last week)
- Singing the Word (which we will unpack tonight)
- Reading the Word
- Preaching the Word (which is unique from the other elements) and
- Seeing the Word (through the ordinances)

Although God's Word is recorded in Scripture, the Word is not a book, the Word is a _____.

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” Jn 5:39-40

God's people have a long history of singing God's Word

“For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.” Nehemiah 12:46

Psalms of Ascent (120-134)

[After Passover with the disciples] “when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” Matthew 26:30

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Acts 16:25

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:18-21

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, *singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*” Colossians 3:16

The question isn't should we sing old songs or new songs
The question isn't should we sing fast songs or slow songs
The question isn't what style is preferred

The fundamental question should be *'Is what we sing faithful to the Word?'*

“Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music.” - Martin Luther

WHAT should we sing?

_____.

The *best* songs, old or new (Ps. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1), are those that direct our focus away from ourselves and lift our eyes up and onto the character of God and the truth of His Word.

If we should sing God's Word, what does that look like exactly?

When you put all the songs we sing together (over the course of a year for instance), do they tell the whole story of the Bible? Do they cover the span of redemptive history in a balanced way? Or in other words, we want to be singing biblically faithful songs about themes such as creation, the reality of sin, God's promises, salvation in Christ, the Church, Christ's second coming and our hope of final restoration in the new heavens and the new earth.

...we want the vast majority of the songs we sing to cause us to reflect on the truths of God's Word rather than on personal experience or emotion. Having said that, it is important to note that just as we see in the Psalms, there is a place for some of the songs we sing to touch on the range of human experience and emotion.

HOW should we sing the Word?

_____.

“Singing deep truth isn't at odds with expressing sincere emotion to God. our hearts are frail and fallen, so we probably shouldn't expect a mountaintop high of exhilaration during congregational singing each week. However, if our singing never moves us to transcendent joy in the savior, we should be concerned about our spiritual state. The point isn't so much the intensity of the emotional experience we have from week to week-we can leave that up to God. The point is that as we sing, we grow in knowing, trusting, and adoring the triune God who is worthy of our praise. Through our singing, we help others delight in him as well.” - Merker

_____.

“Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the congregation. ‘Such remarkable singing! The place is quite renowned for its musical performances!’ This is a poor achievement. Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure—singing in which there is not so much art as heart, not so much of musical sound as of spiritual emotion.” - Spurgeon

WHY should we sing the Word?

_____ : for all the reasons we’ve already touched on.

_____ : music helps us remember the Word

The opportunity to sing 200 songs together as a church over the course of the year will be an integral part of our church’s discipleship process as we’re intentional to sing a steady diet of Christ-centered, truth-saturated songs.

WHEN and WHERE should we sing the Word?

_____ we gather.

... Music in the context of the worship service is not merely ‘preparatory’ for the preaching of the Word, but it’s an essential part of the church’s ministry of the Word...songs teach.

_____ gatherings.

WHO should sing the Word?

The _____’s voice is primary over the _____’s voice.

The church member enduring persecution from his earthly family needs to hear his spiritual brothers and sisters sing, "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee." The Christian burdened by shame needs to hear us exult, "My sin, not in part, but the whole, has been nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more!" Our weary hearts long to hear the gospel reverberate around us in surround sound. We hear the voices of our fellow church members, and remember that we're not in this alone. God has welcomed us into his family.

- Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God’s People

On Sundays, do you primarily listen or do you primarily sing?

“The God-directed ministry of prayer or praise and the notion of edification are intimately linked in the New Testament. Even ‘psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,’ which are expressions of faith and thankfulness to God, are to be considered simultaneously as the means of teaching and admonishing one another.”

- David Peterson

This means that **singing** is part of _____ member's ministry to the whole body.

And congregational singing is not only to our benefit on any given Sunday, but it is also designed by God to offer a foretaste of the day when all of God's family will gather around the throne and sing.

And they sang a new song, saying, *“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”* Revelation 5:9-10

Concluding Thought

The Pastoral Team’s goal for the music at Coral Hill is to faithfully minister the Word through Christ-centered, truth-saturated songs in a way that maximizes the congregation’s voice as we sing to God together *and* minister the Word to one another through our singing...and that this would carry over into our week as we ‘preach the Gospel’ to ourselves and to our families through the songs we sing Monday through Saturday.

Other Notes/Questions

Just a Few Recommendations

Sing Hymnal - <https://www.singhymnal.com/>

Sovereign Grace Music - <https://sovereigngracemusic.com/>

The Worship Initiative - <https://www.theworshipinitiative.com/>

Gettys - <https://www.gettymusic.com/>

CityAlight - <https://www.cityalight.com>

Anchor Hymns - <https://www.anchorhymns.org/>