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WHY HYMNS ARE ABOUT HIM

Introduction – Why We Sing!

People like to sing.

Ever since God made Adam and Eve, men and women and boys and girls have been singing all kinds of songs about all sorts of things. One of the most popular types of songs is a love song. Usually, a love song is about a sweetheart, but people also like to sing about other kinds of love: how much they love their country, their mother or father, their pick-up truck, or even their dog.



People also like to sing about nature—the stars, the forest, or the sea. They like to sing about history or about the future. They sing about kings and queens, about war and peace, about good things and bad things. They sing about serious things, and silly things, like slipping on a banana peel on their way to school!

People sing on special occasions. They sing before baseball games. They sing at funerals. They sing at weddings. They sing at graduations. They sing at the opening ceremonies of the Olympics. Can you think of the special occasion when people sing every day around the world? If you said birthdays, you are right! (Although *you could* sing “Happy Birthday” every day, but people might think you are a little silly.)

This book is about the best kind of song—sung on the most special occasion—the songs we sing to God when we go to church.

We call these kinds of songs “worship songs.” There are different types of worship songs God’s people sing to Him.

There are praise songs. There are psalms. And then there are hymns. (You’ll learn about each of these different kinds of worship songs in this book.)

Unlike all the other songs we just talked about—love songs, silly songs, songs about nature, or baseball games—worship songs are sung to God.



Worship songs are great. Why? Well, think about this. Who created the world, and your vocal cords, and pianos and guitars, and harps and drums and...MUSIC? That's right, God created all of that. He created music and everything that we need to make music. Our heavenly Father is the author of music.

When we sing worship songs, we take the gift of music and give it back to God. That's wonderful!

You may be wondering, why do we sing to God? Because He tells us to!

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 150:6

Are you breathing? (Are you sure?) Well, then, you need to praise the Lord! And one of the ways Christians praise the Lord is by singing songs.

QUICK REVIEW – WHY WE SING!

1. What are some things you like to sing about? _____
2. Name three types of worship songs:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. Who created music? _____

The Queen of Worship Songs

There are different types of songs that people sing to praise the Lord. As we mentioned, there are psalms, praise songs, and hymns. Today, one of the more popular types of worship songs is the chorus or praise song.

section, Psalms 73, complains that the righteous suffer. The last Psalm talks about how the King seems to have failed, describing his crown as in the dust.

Book IV turns to God who has been Israel's help. Moses is mentioned seven times, whereas before he was hardly mentioned at all. This section contains the one Psalm that Moses wrote, Psalm 90.

Book V contains some Psalms that were written after the Israelites returned from their exile. One Psalm predicts the reign of Christ (110), and the section concludes with Psalm 150, a triumphant, well-known doxology.

Types of Psalms

Just like there are many different authors of the Psalms, there are different styles and types of Psalms.

1. **Hymns of Praise.** These types of Psalms are easy to spot because they are filled with happy praises of the Lord. Psalm 8 is a good example.
2. **Laments.** Lament is the opposite of praise. These are prayers/songs filled with sadness and sometimes even anger! At the end of the song, however, the author almost always turns to the Lord for help. You can look up Psalm 25 or 102 to see what a Psalm of lament is like. Do you think it would be appropriate to sing these kinds of songs? Do you think that the songs about our Lord's crucifixion are laments?
3. **Thanksgiving Psalms.** Can you guess what this type of Psalms is about? If you said thanksgiving you are right! In the New Testament, we are told to thank the Lord at all times. Perhaps the people in the New Testament obeyed this commandment by singing some of these Psalms of thanksgiving. See Psalm 18 and 138 for Psalms of thanksgiving when the Lord answered prayer.
4. **Songs of Trust.** Some Psalms have trust as their theme. They are often short and filled with rich imagery. One of the most famous chapters in the whole Bible is Psalm 23, which is a Psalm of trust. Do you remember what Psalms 23 is about? Here is one clue ... it talks about a shepherd and his sheep!



NUMBER OF SYLLABLES IN "PATTY CAKE"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total Syllables
Phrase 1	Patt	y	cake,	patt	y	cake,	ba	kers	man	9
Phrase 2	Bake	me	a	cake	as	fast	as	you	can!	9

Each phrase has 9 syllables. So, guess what the metrical value is? Congratulations! You guessed it (didn't you?). The metrical value, or the total number of syllables for each phrase, is nine, or, properly written, 9.9. Now, let's look at a hymn.

Amazing Grace Tune Name: New Britain
Meter: 8.6.8.6-C.M.
Lyrics by: John Newton

1. A - maz - ing - grace, how sweet the sound, that
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And
 3. Thro' man - y - dan - gers, and toil, and
 4. And when this flesh has put on thou - sand years,
 5. When we've been there an hour, I and Bright

The following chart indicates the metrical value for the hymn, "Amazing Grace." The meter is 8.6.8.6 because phrase one has 8 syllables, phrase two contains 6 syllables, phrase three has 8 syllables, and the last phrase contains 6 syllables.

NUMBER OF SYLLABLES IN HYMN AMAZING GRACE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total Syllables
Phrase 1	A	maz	ing	grace,	how	sweet	the	sound	8
Phrase 2	That	saved	a	wretch	like	me!			6
Phrase 3	I	once	was	lost,	but	now	am	found	8
Phrase 4	Was	blind,	but	now	I	see.			6

Also, did you notice that there are four phrases in this verse of "Amazing Grace?" When writing the meter for this verse we list four numbers, a number for each phrase: 8.6.8.6.

Hymns like "Amazing Grace" follow patterns. That means each verse of the song is the same. Verse one has the metrical value of 8.6.8.6. Guess what verse two and three and four and five look like? Yes, you're correct; they all have the same meter of 8.6.8.6. That is one of the reasons why hymns are often easy to sing. It is easy for us to follow these kinds of patterns that are repeated over and over.

Did you notice in the “Amazing Grace” example that the tune name is the same as the lyrical name ... “Amazing Grace?” But, did you also notice something else? C.M. What does that mean? This is an abbreviation for the meter.

There are different types of meters, but some meters are more common than others. So, as you can probably guess, C. M. stands for “common meter.” The 8.6.8.6 meter is so common that hymnbooks use “C. M.” as an abbreviation. There are other metrical abbreviations:

METER NUMBERS	METER NAME	ABBREVIATION
8.6.8.6.	Common Meter	C.M.
8.8.8.8.	Long Meter	L.M.
6.6.8.6.	Short Meter	S.M.
	Doubled meter (any meter doubled). Used twice in each verse	D.

Some hymn meters, however, are “irregular,” which means it does not follow a particular metrical pattern throughout the song. For example, the first verse could be just like “Amazing Grace” with the metrical value of 8.6.8.6, but then verse two’s metrical pattern would be different: 7.9.4.7.

QUICK REVIEW – METER

51. What is meter? _____

52. Explain an irregular hymn. _____

53. Write out the metrical number of C.M. _____

54. What do the following abbreviations mean?

“C. M.” _____

“L. M.” _____

“S. M.” _____

“D.” _____