

Upright Woman



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Committed to Sing!

by Kathryn Baker



Kathryn is married to Andy Baker who preaches for the Graeber Road Church of Christ in Rosenberg, TX. A native Texan, she is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a degree in finance. Currently, she homeschools their 3 children, is a contributing writer for the Come Fill Your Cup blog, and occasionally speaks at ladies' events. In her spare time, she enjoys food (both cooking and eating!), vegetable gardening, and taking their Boston Terrier for walks.

It happens regularly on trips around town. You back the car out of the driveway, and the next thing you know you arrive at the grocery store with little recollection of the events in between. You have been on autopilot. If we are honest with ourselves, it happens in our worship too. We begin singing a song we know by heart, but our mind travels a million miles away as the words flow from our mouth. In I Corinthians 14:15, Paul gives the admonition that our praise to God should be from a fully engaged heart and mind. As we think about singing with understanding, consider these five areas of commitment that will help us sing with our whole heart (Ps. 9).

Commitment to the Vertical. In a world where our consumeristic mindset has fully spilled over into the worship arena, the beauty of singing in worship is that it is something that we do individually. While many are asking, "What can this worship service do for me?", a more important question is, "What can I do in worship?" You can sing! When I sing, it is my lips and my heart – my individual sacrifice of praise to God (Heb. 13:15). It is my heart – the strings of which are plucked with deep emotion (Eph. 5:19). It is my direct participation in worship to the Father who is worthy of my praise (Ps. 145) because I understand He is my primary audience.

Commitment to the horizontal. Yes, singing is something we do individually, but it is also done collectively. We live in an increasingly virtual world, and we must give pause for self-reflection to the command to "sing to one another" (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Can I fulfill this command without being physically present or by standing in silence preferring to listen? Regardless of the quality of the sound I produce, I sing because I understand that I cannot teach, admonish, or encourage my Christian family if I am not committed to singing with them.

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Commitment to the educational. The purpose given for our singing in Colossians 3:16 is for teaching and admonishing. Specifically, it is a practical way to let God's word dwell in us! The teaching/learning aspect of song shows the great wisdom of God. Ask any teacher one of the best ways to help students memorize facts - put it in a song! Music aids retention and meditation simply because it gets stuck in our head. Singing hymns help us internalize spiritual truths that can be easily recalled in times of need. Whether I'm singing of God's promises, the coming judgment, or a direct quote of Galatians 2:20, I understand that my commitment to sing helps to hide God's word in my heart (Ps. 119:11).

Commitment to the emotional. The wisdom of God's command to sing is not only beneficial for personal and congregational growth, but it also stirs the heart like nothing else. Why would God command we pluck the strings of our hearts if emotions were not involved (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)? We are emotional creatures, and music has a way of bringing those emotions to the surface. However, it also must be kept in check. No matter how a hymn makes me feel, if my lifestyle Monday through Saturday does not align with the words that I profess on Sunday, I can easily be made a liar. Being committed to the emotional aspect of my worship in song requires great focus, because I understand my heart and actions must be connected to the text.

Commitment to the principle. When we look at scripture with the proper perspective, it is true that mechanical instruments were permitted in Old Testament worship (see Ps. 149, 150). But, along with the other elements of Old Testament worship, that authorization was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Nowhere in the New Testament do we find them used, either through explicit command or example. Rather, every verse specifically prescribes singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The early church gathered regularly for prayers and praise (Acts 2:47), and it is referenced in various letters (I Cor. 14:15; Heb. 2:12; Ja. 5:13). It is not just a matter of acapella singing because it is our preference, though it is beautiful! It is not simply a matter of holding on to a long-standing tradition. Rather, I am committed to the principle of singing in worship because I joyfully understand that it is simply what God wants.

Our minds are constantly going in a thousand directions. We are adept at juggling, multitasking, and shuffling the to-do list. It is no wonder we so often find ourselves on autopilot. Worshipping God together is our greatest privilege but also a great challenge that requires us to commit to staying engaged in singing!

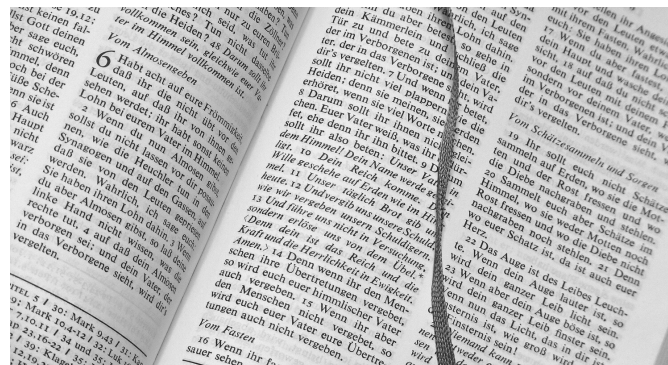
Though Trials Should Come

by Anna Grace Arreola

Anna lives in San Angelo, Texas with her husband, Victor; their three year-old son, Benjamin; and their seven month-old daughter, Felicity. Anna is a member of the church family at 9th & Main, enjoys teaching children's Bible class, and instructs freshman composition courses at Angelo State University. Victor and Anna will celebrate a decade of tackling life as husband and wife in June of this year, God willing.

Imagine this: You have a family you love, you're financially stable, and you're grateful. Then a citywide fire ruins you financially. Your spouse and three children head to a new location, and you plan to join them soon. When a message arrives from your spouse, your heart breaks as you read, "Saved alone what shall I do." [1] Your spouse survived the trip, but your children did not.

This was the true story of Horatio Gates Spafford. In 1873, his three daughters went down with the SS Ville de Havre as it sailed to England, and it was near the



site of the sinking that Spafford, a grieving father, very soon after penned the words to "It Is Well with My Soul."

When we experience hard things as Christians - when our precious ones die or we are scrutinized harshly for our faith or we suddenly lose our jobs - we tend to turn immediately to prayer, not to song. The scriptures tell us to sing when we are cheerful (James 5:13), but what role does singing have when we are grieving and angry?

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Paul tells the Colossian Christians to “let the peace of God rule in your hearts” directly before he commands them to sing: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs . . .” (Col. 3:15-16). One way to comfort one another, and ourselves, is to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly – through song.

In this passage in Colossians, gratitude also plays a role in helping us through our sorrow. As Paul tells the Colossian church to have peace and to sing, he also tells them – twice in three verses – to be thankful (Col. 3:15, 17). The difficult things we face are more bearable when we remember every good and perfect gift our Father has given us (Ja. 1:17) – the greatest of which is His Son for our sins. This is the comfort we see expressed in the lyrics of “It Is Well with My Soul.” (Before continuing, please find and read the stanzas of the hymn “It Is Well with My Soul”)

The hymn’s four stanzas speak of 1) inner peace because of 2) the salvation of our souls, which leads to 3) hope because regardless of what happens to us here, Christ is coming back and our hardships will end. We see this same message of peace, because of salvation, which leads to hope in Romans 5: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which And then, surprisingly, Paul links this hope back to tribulation:

“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:1-4). So, too, does James (Ja. 1:2-4) and Peter (I Pet. 5:10). We stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Consider the inner peace of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who didn’t mince words before the king or alter their allegiance to God, even if it meant being burned alive (Dan. 3:16-18). Consider the confidence Daniel had in his eternal salvation, regardless of whether physical salvation came, so much so that he didn’t stop praying when it sent him to the lions (Dan. 6). Consider the hope of Joseph, who, after being betrayed by his brothers, falsely accused by his master’s wife, and thrown into prison for years, saw God’s grace through it all (Gen. 45:5, 8).

Speaking of hope: In Spafford’s original lyrics, [2] the final words of the song refer to Christ’s return as “a song in the night” – a source of comfort. Paul also spoke of Jesus’s coming again as a source of comfort (I Thess. 4:13-18), as it needs to be for us. The One Who loved us, even in our sins, is coming back for us (Rom. 5:8).

Each burden is heavy to the one who bears it. Whatever yours is, “whatever your lot,” compare it to Christ’s trials, His tribulation. Remember why He was able to despise the shame: He knew the Father was pleased when He saw Him, and He knew what was coming after the grave (Heb. 12:2; John 13:3). Remember to be thankful, to speak – and sing!– of the blessings God has given to us (Mal. 3:16). Let yourself be taught to say, “It is well, it is well with my soul.”

**"Though Satan
should buffet,
though trials should
come,
Let this blest
assurance control,
That Christ hath
regarded my helpless
estate,
And hath shed His
own blood for my
soul."**

[1] Anna T. Spafford, “Telegram from Anna Spafford to Horatio Gates Spafford re Being ‘Saved Alone’ among Her Traveling Party in the Shipwreck of the Ville du Havre” (Library of Congress, 1873), www.loc.gov/resource/mamcol.011/.

[2] Horatio G. Spafford, “Image 1 of Draft Manuscript Copy of Hymn ‘It Is Well with My Soul’ by Horatio Gates Spafford” (Library of Congress, 1873), hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mamcol.016.

L i g h t - H e a r t e d

When the year has been horrible, the month has been tough,
the week has been awful, and the day has been rough,
when it seems the world's bleak and it's certainly not bright,
and there's a great deal of dark and not much of light;
When you're deep in the dark, look up: find the embers
that turn bright in the night. Don't forget to remember.

Remember the star that led the way for the wise
took them on through the dark where the Daystar had arrived.
Their journey was long, but their journey was worth
meeting the Maker of Heaven and Earth.
And the Father of lights, for Whom no shadow comes,
guides us too through the night on our tough journey home.

Remember the list of our blessings's far longer
than the list of the trials that have made our souls stronger;
that our Author and Finisher, Who despised all the shame,
has set down by the Father and tells Him our names.
Let's remember what we finish will be more than what we started,
and though we travel through dark, we can travel light-hearted.

By Anna Grace Arreola

22 December 2020

Sing and Be Happy: Joy in Christ

by Jamie Parks

"Sing and Be Happy": I am going to be bold in saying that one would have a difficult time in singing this song without immediately being reminded of the joy a Christian can have in Christ. Everything from the relatable lyrics to the intended tempo and harmony exudes the attainable happiness that can be ours, even within the dark world in which we live. How can we find the silver lining that shines, when we are dealing with earthly burdens? How can we have pleasure untold, both in this life and through eternity? It all boils down to Jesus Christ.

Let us start by thinking about the troubles of life that can weigh us down. There have and always will be troubles and hard times for human beings. We will all have low times in our life. The silver lining is that, as Christians, we have amazing promises and gifts that can bring us joy because of Christ. When we are sad or lonely, we know that God is always with us, and that He is our strength (Matt. 28:20; Ps. 34:17-19; Ps. 28:7). When we go through trials or persecutions that test our faith, we know that we can be equipped to make it through, strengthened (Ja. 1:2-3,12; Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Cor. 1:3-6; Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 3:13-17). We don't have to worry about earthly gain or possessions, because we have the most wonderful gifts through Christ and look forward to our ultimate reward of eternity in heaven. On this same note, we can also have joy and peace knowing that God will take care of us (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Matt. 6:19-21, 25-34; Phil. 3:14; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 11:13-15).

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Getting to Know...

By: Carol Tisdale

Nelda Savage

Nelda Savage and her husband Phil have been members of the SW congregation since moving to Buda in 2012. We have grown to love them for their kind, sweet nature and willingness to use their talents and abilities alongside their brothers and sisters here. They have servants' hearts. No job is too big or seemingly "beneath" them – they are workers in our congregation and we're so grateful for their example.



"Junebug," as she was nicknamed in her youth, was born in Sentinal, Oklahoma but for most of her childhood she grew up in Childress and Clarendon, Texas. "I was born in Oklahoma but got to Texas as fast as I could" is an applicable slogan for her as it is for me!!

Reflecting back on her childhood, Nelda treasures above all others, the spiritual gifts her parents gave her – setting the example of faithful worship to God and teaching her to know Him. Her mother was blessed to be a homemaker full-time and her father was a multi-tasking, talented man who worked as a teacher, coach, principal, rancher, farmer and preacher of the Church of Christ.

What did Nelda want to be when she grew up? A teacher or a nurse. She took a different path. After attending Clarendon Junior College and West Texas State University she spent 21 years as a Dental Assistant and Office Manager.

While attending WTSU, Phil Savage entered her life and they were married in 1970. Their first home was in Canyon before they moved to Pampa, TX where they lived 40 years, the majority of their married life. Two sons were born to the Savages: Guy and Kevin. These sons have filled their parents' hearts with so much joy and love. At age 42, Kevin passed away and that has left Nelda and Phil heartbroken, ever so lonely for him. To help fill that emptiness, they take joy and delight in the two grandsons Kevin gave them. Handsome, as was their father, Conley and Cole bring great pride and happiness to "Papa" and "Nana."

Our Nelda is talented! She is an artist and her paintings are stunning. She paints in oil and watercolor, favoring animals as her subject matter. She plays the piano. Quilting is another expression of her creativity and her fellow SW quilters have witnessed her attention to detail and desired perfection in her final quilts. And if you have ever sat near Nelda during our song service, you are aware that she has a most lovely singing voice.

We asked a few short questions of our sister to get to know her better. Here are her answers:

- Classifies herself as an "extrovert."
- When she wants to be alone, she goes for a drive.

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- Loves reading the book of Psalms as it brings her much comfort.
 - Listening to music and painting calms her.
 - Doesn't dwell on getting older. Tries to enjoy every day and stay spiritually and physically healthy.
 - Smiles and friendliness are gestures that have a big impact on her. She tries to smile and be friendly to everyone and not just those whom she knows.
 - Has a fear of flying.
 - Favorite hymns: "Each Step I Take," "It Is Well With My Soul," "His Eye is on the Sparrow." These songs touch her. They are calming and encouraging, reminding her that God is always with us.

Nelda was asked about older women teaching the younger women of the congregation and if she has thoughts to share. She said that when her boys were growing up she worked outside the home for most of the time and her advice to other Moms in the same situation is to make sure your children can see that THEY come first, not your job. "Leave your job at the workplace and be the best mother you can be when you come home. Enjoy every single day with your children while they are with you because they will be grown and gone much sooner than you think."

**"Love one another with brotherly affection.
Outdo one another in showing honor."**

Romans 12:10

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We can have joy and comfort knowing that Jesus has already overcome the world and that we can overcome the world as well (John. 16:33; 1 John. 5:4-5; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 John. 1:7, 2:5-6, 15-17, 24-25; Rev. 2:10). We know that we don't have to fight our way through life alone because Christ is the Head of the church. We have this treasured group of people that will walk with us throughout life, with common biblical values, love, and goals (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:32; 1 John 4:11; Rom. 12:10; Phil. 1:27-28, 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:10; Ja. 5:19-20).

As "Sing and Be Happy" teaches us, our joy in Christ is gained through having faith, trust, and hope in Him. We do this by pressing on to the goal of living in obedience to Him. If we have our eyes on Christ, rejoicing in what He has done for us, we can endure the troubles we may encounter on Earth. Hebrews 12:1-2 teaches this truth very well. Immediately before these verses, chapter eleven holds the various examples of people from Old Testament times who had great faith. These people are the "witnesses" spoken of in Hebrews 12:1. Since we see the examples of great faith in all of these people, we should lay aside every hindrance we may have (earthly worries/burdens), as well as "the sin which so easily ensnares us." While it makes sense to say that this sin could refer to any sin with which we may struggle with, the context is more directly referring to the sin of unbelief. (Heb. 3:12) We cannot have joy in Christ and all of His promises if we do not believe, or have faith, in Him. This is why it is so important that we keep running the race of a Christian life, going toward heaven with endurance. We have to keep our eyes on Christ. We look to Jesus Christ because He is the "author and finisher of our faith." Jesus is the originator and fulfiller of the faith, which is the gospel (Jude 3; Rom. 1:16). Hebrews 12:2 goes on to say that Jesus endured the cross, "for the joy that was set before Him." There are numerous ideas as to what this is referring to, but I would argue that this means that Jesus willingly and lovingly left heaven and endured the shame of the cross because He knew of the joy that His sacrifice would bring for all of mankind that choose to obey Him. He endured because He wanted us to have the joy of redemption.

Isn't it an amazing relief to know that we have Christ on our side when we choose to be on His side? With this knowledge, we can endure all the problems of life, with joy and peace from Christ in our hearts. "If we look by faith and trust in His promises, we shall have pleasure untold" (Phil. 3:8-21, 4:6-9; Acts 20:24; Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Rev. 2:10; Heb. 10:22-25).

This World is Not My Home

by Emily Cammock

The Israelites trekked across miles of desert in search of a homeland. They endured the agonizing monotony of a manna and quail diet because they had a homeland waiting. They conquered established nations and mighty kings in order to take possession of their homeland. Christian friends, our obstacles are very different than those of the Israelites, but we must nevertheless endure and conquer in order to inherit the homeland that awaits us.

The words of a much-loved, traditional hymn call to mind the outlook we must have in order to attain our heavenly homeland, "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue." These familiar words remind us that, like the Israelites, we are only making our way through this land temporarily. Jesus Himself instructs us to keep a mindset that transcends the things of this world: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:19-20).

The last line of each stanza of this famous hymn is, "...and I can't feel at home in this world anymore." This is a natural result for the Christian who takes the instruction of 1 John 2:15 seriously: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

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This serious admonition reminds us that our Lord does not want us setting down our emotional roots on earthly things. Our focus should be on God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Christians of the first century were encouraged by Peter who beseeched them to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." His basis for this plea was simple – they were "sojourners and pilgrims" (1 Pet. 2:11). What simple motivation! Do not give into the base desires of this world because you are only here temporarily – there is something much better in store! While the world works to satisfy their fleshly lusts, we must keep our eye on heaven's open door.

While the temptations of this life on earth seem to reach out with grasping clutches, attempting to ensnare us, we must maintain a transitory mindset if we are to reach the homeland. Hebrews 11:13-14 speaks of the great characters of the Old Testament, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland." These faithful of old knew that they were "just a-passing through," and it shaped their entire outlook on life.

Jesus, Himself, maintained this transitory and transcendent mindset. Hebrews 12:2 explains how our Savior looked beyond His suffering toward the joy that was waiting, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Enduring His excruciating torture and death was made possible because He knew what would come after. In the same way, our endurance through trials can be maintained by keeping our eyes on the end goal – heaven.

This level of endurance is possible only by keeping in proper perspective the temporary nature of this world and the eternal nature of the reward that comes after. This mindset is what will allow us to stand firm in the faith when our jobs and homes are threatened, because we do not bow to the corrupt culture's ever-changing ideas of what is moral. This idea of transcending an ungodly culture means that we will protect our hearts and the hearts of our families from the constant onslaught of media and entertainment filth. Again, 1 John 2:15 directs us: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Colossians 3:1-2 gives us a parting thought, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Every time we sing the beloved hymn, "This World is Not My Home" let us be reminded of the many times Scripture encourages us to look above the things of the world and focus on the eternal. It is only by focusing on heaven that we can make it through this life as faithful Christians.

About Upright Woman

The Upright Woman publication is intended to educate, promote, and encourage the women of the church to strive for righteousness in every aspect of life. It is the mission of this publication to provide women an opportunity to study the word and share articles about various issues and topics to encourage us to be upright women in an upside down world.

"FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE LOVES RIGHTEOUS DEEDS; THE UPRIGHT SHALL BEHOLD HIS FACE." PSALM 11:7



We pray that, with every issue and with every article, all glory is given to God.