

Getting The Most From Singing 02-02-20

Most are familiar with the distinct nature of Old Covenant Worship. We read about the work of Priests, which was the work of worship (Hebrews 9:6) as well as the work of their brethren the Levites, which was a spiritual service to the nation of Israel (Numbers 18:6). Yet some are unfamiliar with the structure of these things that David instituted, as related in 1 Chronicles 15. There we see in particular that David organized the music of worship by appointing men to lead the music of Israel. David appointed Chief singers, particularly Asaph, Heman and Ethan. These men were known as the wisest of men in Israel (1 Kings 4:31), and together they wrote a number of Psalms on worship and singing (Psalm 86, 89, etc.).

When we study the Psalms of worship, we find that these are the things that they describe: Singing, Praying, The Passover/feasts, coming to Jerusalem, and offering sacrifices. While we know that Old Testament worship is no longer acceptable (John 4:21-23), we are also told that Old Testament worship pointed to the New Testament worship (1 Corinthians 10:11). The very themes of the Psalms are used to promote the worship of Christ now. We are spiritually both Priests AND Levites, since we are both offering worship as well as offering spiritual service (Romans 12:1). Worship is a community activity; not everything is worship. Our assembly together is our time of worship (1 Cor. 11-14). Singing is a fundamental part of worshipping God.

So how do we get the most from our singing in worship? First we need to understand the spiritual nature of song, and second we need to understand the songs we sing.

We need to understand that there is a path that singing is meant to follow. Singing begins in the heart (Psalm 84:2). Jesus said that “the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” in Matthew 12:34 and again in Matthew 15:18. When we sing, we are told that it must come from the heart (Ephesians 5:19). As we sing a Hymn, singing becomes worship. It is specifically a sacrifice when it comes from the heart out the mouth (Hebrews 13:15).

Singing is to glorify God (Psalm 66:2). Colossians 3:16 tells us that we are “singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” But it also tells us that singing is for one another (Psalm 89:1, Eph. 5:19). Paul directed the Corinthians to be mindful of this in 1 Corinthians 14:26. Finally, singing is also something that personally lifts up the singer. James suggested this in James 5:13 when he said “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”

We need to also understand the nature of the songs we sing. Our songs are (mostly) NOT inspired, requiring our mindfulness in singing them. We must define (in our minds at least) OUR intent in them. We must sing “with understanding” (1 Corinthians 14:15). Sometimes words are archaic; we need to learn them. We ought to spend some time learning how to sing, comprehending the way we sing together.

We might consider that there are wrong ways to “get more”. When we are pursuing entertainment over worship or choosing to be an audience vs. a singer. Ultimately, when men are adding things like instruments and choirs they are seeking their own glory rather than to praise God. All cause us to get less and give less; these things render singing unspiritual and unprofitable to us, lacking in praise to God.

God wants you to sing from the Heart, with the understanding, praising Him and encouraging the Saints.