



Doorway to Hope

The Newsletter of Hope Church, P.C.A.

Our Vision: Training People for L.I.F.E

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When You Don't Feel Like Singing

Randall VanMeggelen

Table Talk Magazine, January 2015

Submitted by Jeff Butler

Over the past one hundred years, Christians have sung, "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free" countless times. Despite what one might think about "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," the hymn rings true in that our joy and freedom in Christ make us want to sing, yet, sometimes we are not happy and do not feel like singing in corporate worship. It is therefore helpful to consider some aspects of sung praises in order to properly address this feeling.

PURPOSE: God saved us to proclaim His praises (I Peter 2:9). He seeks true worshipers (John 4:23) who express their worship in song. Singing is an important means of glorifying and enjoying God. Singing expresses our covenant relationship with God and submission to His will. It demonstrates the unity we enjoy in God with His people. We sing to offer adoration, praise, and gratitude to God for His name, perfections, Word, and works. Singing helps us remember and cel-

brate God's past saving deeds, rejoice in His present goodness, and rehearse our future heavenly worship. Singing is also a command, gift, and spiritual discipline that is formative not only for what we believe, but how we live. *Therefore, proclaim God's praises.*

PASSION: Worship rightly evokes feelings, but it is not chiefly about how we feel. Our feelings must be informed by God's Word and subject to Christ's lordship, not to the whims of personal preference. Scripture commands us to rejoice in the Lord. Singing enlivens our minds, wills, and feelings in ways that words alone cannot. When we engage our whole selves by presenting our "bodies as a liv-

ing sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1), He does not despise our worship, but is pleased to bless our obedience with a greater hunger for joy in Him. *Therefore, sing even when you do not feel like it.*



PRESENCE: Find great encouragement in the knowledge that in worship, Christ is with us. By His blood we may boldly enter the Most Holy Place (Heb. 10:19). He is our ever-present High Priest who inhabits our praises (Ps. 22:3), sings with

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us, praises God, and declares His name to us (Heb. 2:12; Ps. 22:22; Rom. 15:9). His presence is our joy (Ps. 16:11) and His joy is our strength (Neh. 8:10). *Therefore pray for Christ's mercy and aid.*

PROVISION: God gives us all we need for life and godliness. Genuine joyful singing, like every discipline, is the work of God's grace. We cannot muster up joy in our own strength. God gives us the desire and strength to obey Him. Philippians is helpful in showing the relationships among God's precepts, promises, and provisions: "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (2:13); "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (4:13); "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (4:19). *Therefore, trust in God's full provision.*

PRIORITY: Give priority to grateful praise and communion with God in all of life (Ps. 34:1; 113:3; Heb. 13:15). The Psalms model the believer's desire to be in God's presence. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'" (Ps. 122.1; see Pss. 26:8; 27:4). As with any ritual, corporate worship is only as meaningful as the relationship, activity, or event to which it points. If Christ's Word dwells richly in our minds and hearts, joyful corporate worship will follow (Col. 3:16-17). *Therefore, prioritize the practice of daily communion with God via His Word, prayer and song.*

PENITENCE: If we are not seeking the Lord throughout the week but are living in unrepentant disobedience, we will not feel like singing to the Lord. Our joy will be sapped, our lips silenced, and our vitality dried up (Ps. 32:3-4). We must pray for God to search us, give us repentant hearts, renew our spirits, restore our joy, and open our lips to show forth His praise (51:10-15). Seek the forgiveness of those against whom you have sinned, forgive those who have sinned against you, and remove all bitterness. God promises that in Christ, the genuinely repentant may have full assurance of faith and a clear

conscience (Heb. 10:19-25). *Therefore, find true joy in the forgiveness of your sins.*

PREPARATION: Singing is not a passive activity. We are commanded to love, worship, and sing to God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30; Ps. 138:1), in spirit and truth (John 4:24), and with understanding (I Cor. 14:15). We must be spiritually prepared, physically rested, mentally alert, emotionally expectant, and ready to commune with God in worship. The Songs of Ascents (Pss. 120-134) are helpful in refocusing our attention on the joy of entering God's presence. *Therefore, prepare to meet God in corporate worship.*

CONCLUSION: Singing to the Lord, in all its fullness, is not simply reciting a text set to a tune, but expressing the offering of our whole selves to God in vital, personal communion. May God "take my voice, and let me sing, always, only, for my King."



Learn God's Word

Vanishing Grace: What Ever Happened to the Good News,

By Philip Yancey

Reviewed by Rae Whitehead

Our Sunday School class on Tim Keller's **Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith** was a challenge, as many of us in the class realized that we tend to be "Elder Brothers" in our "right living" and judgmental attitudes toward the "Prodigals" in our lives. Keller's book whetted my appetite and led me again to Henri Nouwen's two books on Jesus' parable: **The Return of the Prodigal Son** and **Home Tonight** (both of which I highly recommend). At the same time, Philip Yancey's new book **Vanishing Grace** was brought to my attention. Like the other three books, it offers the Gospel as grace. Yancey sees our failure as Christians to be salt and light in the Post-Christian culture as often being the result of lack of love and lack of humility. Common complaints about Christians in our culture are: "You don't listen to me. You judge me. Your faith confuses me. You talk about what's wrong instead of making it right." Jesus said that people would know that we are Christians by how we love one another. And Jesus reaches others through us—by our love! Yancey quotes Henri

Nouwen: "Humility is the real Christian virtue."



When we come to realize that...only God saves, then we are free to serve, then we can live truly humble lives." During a mission trip to South America, Nouwen changed from "dispensing religion" to "dispensing grace." Yancey writes: "Grace dispensers give out of their own bounty, in *gratitude* (a word with the same root as *grace*) for what we have received from God."

In Part One, "A World Athirst," Yancey describes how grace is endangered in our Christian culture and how we can reclaim the Good News. Part Two discusses how we can affect our world as pilgrims, activists, and artists. Part Three, "Is It Really Good News?" challenges us to think about our faith. "Does Faith Matter?" "Is There Anyone Else?" "Why Are We Here?" and "How should we live?" are some of the questions he addresses. (Sounds like Jim Wever's Sunday School class, doesn't it?) Yancey ends his book with a discussion of Christians and politics (in which "Be careful!" is probably the operative phrase) and with a chapter on "Holy Subversion." "Our confused society badly needs a community of ordinary pilgrims who insist on living a different way....Unlike popular cul-

ture, we will lavish attention on the 'least deserving,' in direct opposition to our celebrity culture's emphasis on success, wealth, and beauty." Philip Yancey is a classic Christian writer-- the list of his publications covers a whole page-- yet he still writes with humility, humor and hope. He travels all over the world and engages with Christians in China, Korea, Russia, Africa. Yet he also has time to be part of a secular book group and he visits churches of all kinds everywhere. (I was especially touched by a friend of his who realized that the longer he was a Christian, the fewer non-believers he knew. So he said of his church, "We decided to attend to our community instead of asking our community to attend the church.") Wow!!

Yancey ends his book on a hopeful note: "Christ-followers need not live in fear, even when it may seem that society is turning against us....The yeast spreads, the salt preserves, the tree survives, even in dark and foreboding times." I hope your appetite may be whetted, as was mine, and that we might live more grace-fully and graciously in this confusing culture. This book will help!

Earth, Fire, Water, Air

By Walter Wangerin, Jr.

This clay
This standing, two-legged heap of earth,
Bone-dust, blood-dust, a brain-pan full of synaptic dust,
Dirt, grinning,
Soil furrowed across the forehead, and down the cheeks
 Gouged with tears,
This lumpish, pumping heart,
This body,
Mine.

This me—O my God, what are we going to do with it?
 It grows delta-like, the little silt on swell to
continents

 at the mouth
 of the rivers

and I hate it

 like the mountain rock-slides a little stone
untriggers it,
 and it comes rumbling down
 pounding towns and faces, people, places
under it—
 for anger,
 lust

and I hate it.

Or like deserial sand-storms, whip-stinging,
 it flings criticism in the eyes of the others,
 lashes their hearts, their skins and all their deeds
 till they lose their way and bow their heads
 humiliated
 before such! proud! fury!

and I hate it.

Then what are we going to do with it?

Burn it, father.

Burn it, O my God.

Drive fire all through my being

And let no vein not know the caustic shot of cleansing:

 Let lightning dazzle back behind my eyes;

 My foul tongue, fry it;

 Scorch the whole interior,

 Until the tears are bubbling boil

 And lust and anger soften, pride unpeels,

 And I am char,

 And I am hollowed of myself,

 Am nothing, nothing,

 But cinder at white-heat.

Then, in the same instant,
Drop me, O my Jesus, in the water,,
What a blessing!
What a popping and a whistling!
What a jubilation there will be among the angels
 When heat hits cold
 And dry is drowned in wet;
 Hate shivers

to death,

 And the clay's made hard in such a sudden washing
 Shaped in a shape not my own, but

yours—

 and so shall I swim,

 and so shall I float at perfect ease in

Thine amnion—

But not forever.

For then shall come the exaltation.

You, O Holy Spirit, shall be a whirlwind.

Snatch me from the water, blast me dry, and
breathe on me,

 Breathe on me!

 Breathe on me, Spirit of God!

Blow in my nostrils life again,

 that out of my mouth the words come pealing,

 born by thee

 for thee—

Ho! I shall cry upon all winds

 all breezes

 down the westerlies to every ear, cry

Him I love!

And then I will not hurt you any more, my people

 family, child and woman,

 I, that sometime suffocated life from you,

 mud in your mouth,

But I will be the zephyr on your cheek

 sweet evening after a vulgar day

 and husky lullaby

 and whisperings shall tangle at thine ear;

 Hush, him I love;

 Hush, Him I love,

For so He first hushed me.

What Secret Purple Wisdom

Wedding poem for Jeff and Donna, September 20, 1997

By Luci Shaw

What word informs the world,
And moves the worm along in his blind tunnel?
What secret purple wisdom tells the iris edges
to unfold in frills? What juiced and emerald thrill
urges the sap until the bud resolves
its tight riddle? What irresistible command
unfurls *this* cloud above *this* greening hill
or one more wave—its spreading foam and foil—
across the flats of sand? What minor thrust
of energy issues up from humus in a froth
of ferns? Delicate as a laser, it filigrees
the snow, the stars. Listen close—What silver sound
thaws winter into spring? Speaks clamor into singing?
Gives love for loneliness? It must be this
unterrestrial pulse, deeper than space, that holds you
in its deep embrace, gongs in your echo hearts.

From “Murder in the Cathedral”

T. S. Elliot

We praise thee, O God, for thy glory
displayed in all the creatures of the earth
in the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in
the storm;
in all of thy creatures, both the hunters
and the hunted...
They affirm thee in living;
all things affirm thee in living;
the bird in the air, both the hawk and the
finch;
the east on the earth, both the wolf and
the lamb;...
Therefore man, whom thou hast made
to be conscious of thee,
must consciously praise thee,
in thought and in word and in deed.
Even with the hand to the broom,
the back bent in laying the fire,
the knee bent in cleaning the hearth...
The back bent under toil,
the knee bent under sin,
the hands to the face under fear,
the head bent under grief,
Even in us the voices of the seasons,
the snuffle of winter, the song of spring,
the drone of summer,
the voices of beasts and of birds,
praise thee.

“The Gospel Way”

[from the Valley of Vision]

Blessed Lord Jesus, no human mind could con-
ceive or invent the gospel.

Acting in eternal grace, you are both its messen-
ger and its message, lived out on earth through
infinite compassion, applying your life to insult,
injury, and death, that I might be redeemed, ran-
somed, and freed.

Blessed are You, O Father, for contriving this
way. Eternal thanks to you, O Lamb of God, for
opening this way. Praise everlasting to you, O
Holy Spirit, for applying this way to my heart.

Glorious Trinity, impress the gospel on my soul,
until its virtue diffuses every faculty; let it be
heard, acknowledged, professed, felt. Teach me
to secure this mighty blessing;

Help me to give up every darling lust, to submit
heart and life to its command, to have it in my
will, controlling my affections' molding my un-
derstanding;

To adhere strictly to the ways of true religion,
not departing from them in any instance, nor for
any advantage in order to escape evil, inconven-
ience or danger.

Take me to the cross to seek glory from its infa-
my; Strip me of every pleasing pretense of
righteousness by my own doings.

O gracious Redeemer, I have neglected you too
long, often crucified you, crucified you afresh by
my impenitence, put you to open shame.

I thank you for the patience that has borne with
me so long, and for the grace that now makes me
willing to be yours.

O unite me to yourself with inseparable bonds,
that nothing may ever draw me back from you,
my Lord, My Savior.

Foster Loving Relationships

Reflections on the Church Library

By Sally Jenkins

Our church library is often used during the week by a mom or dad who is waiting for their child to finish up in their classroom. They are generally thoughtful, pleasant and thankful as I interact with them. Recently when I came in toward my office I was met with the comment, "This is an awesome library with a lot of really good books in it." She was so very thankful to be able to wait there and read while her son attended preschool at Spa Christian.

Since our library does not have a librarian per se, the bins were pretty full, the piles were getting quite high and the books had not been regularly returned to their shelves. Yet, there are many spiritual, practical and theological "gems" in there.

At a later date I was asked, "Who takes care of the library?" "Would anyone mind if I shelved the books and cataloged some things?" I was delighted to hear the offer and since then she has put a lot of effort and love into our library while enjoying the books that live there.

Members and friends of Hope, I encourage you to stop in there and sign out a book or two. There is an awesome selection of fiction, non-fiction, practical helps, theology and everything in between. There have been many times over the years when I have come upon a title that caught my eye and then spoke to my heart. One such book was *Created to be God's Friend: How God Shapes Those He Loves* by Henry Blackaby. The review of this book states: *God called Abraham to be His friend. Henry Blackaby uses the example set by Abraham to show how God uses difficult events, traumatic circumstances, and trying life experiences to lead us to spiritual maturity. Readers will learn how God interacts with His people to transform them into men and women He can call friends. From the first time we respond to God's Spirit in our lives through the choices that help us develop a worthy character, Abraham's story shows us how we can be transformed and become friends of God.*

**STOP INTO THE HOPE CHURCH LIBRARY
AND CHECK OUT A BOOK OR TWO!**

Life at Spa Christian

Mandy Klint <><

Administrator

Life at Spa Christian has been a-flutter with excitement as our 5th and 6th graders have prepared for and presented their culture and science fair reports. Our students have also been busily preparing for the spring concert, which is on May 8th at Abundant Life Church. We welcome you to come and worship God together with us as we praise Him through song, dance, recitation, and signing.

In addition to our concert, we have a couple other upcoming events that may interest you. April 16th is Grandparent's/VIP day. This is a time where grandparents or special friends are welcome to come from 9:30-10:30 and enjoy chapel and a snack together. You are invited to join us for this event. You are also invited to our annual fundraising gala, on May 30th. More information will be released soon on this fun night of dinner and entertainment.

At the end of February our school held an enrollment dinner, in order to celebrate our school as a family and cast a vision for our future. It was a fabulous time and I am happy to announce that we already have 6 more students enrolled for next year than we currently have this school year. Please continue to pray with us that the community would see the Lord here, and would come seeking an education where God is honored through learning. We are praying for you as you make decisions about your future. May the Lord be at work in this building!



Extend God's Hope

Helped By a Homeless Man: The Tables Are Turned!

By Rae Whitehead

I have a friend who has a heart for homeless people. He usually speaks to folks on the street if they appear to be needy. He tries to be "wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove" and does not give cash, but asks instead if he can buy the person a meal, or help him/her in some specific way.

On one occasion recently, my friend spoke to a homeless man, and ended up taking him to Wendy's for a substantial meal. As they were eating, my friend realized that his cell phone was missing. He briefly checked his pockets, and the thought came to him: "Here I helped a hungry man, and he stole my phone!" When the man (we'll call him Joe) had gone to get some catsup, my friend went through one of Joe's pockets! Then he thought, "I know what to do!" He got up, went to a near-by table, and said to the man sitting there, "I have an emergency; may I use your cell phone?" The man obliged, and my friend called his own cell phone, to no avail. Then he thought, "I know! I'll offer Joe \$20.00 and say, 'My phone is really important to me. Here's some money. Please return my phone.'" Before he could say this, Joe looked up and said, "Oh! Do you need to make a call? Here! Use my phone!"

When my friend returned to his car, he found his cell phone! It was in a previously undiscovered pocket, and the sound was muted. Do you think that God has a sense of humor? Isn't it wonderful that we live in His Upside-Down Kingdom?



**Next Doorway to Hope
Deadline is May 15th.**



BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Miriam Emerson
- 10 Steve Brumagin
- 20 Steve Turner

ANNIVERSARIES

- 13 Bill & Leona Digges
- 19 John & Sharon Milne
- 25 Fred & Ruth Richards

BIRTHS

Congratulations to Nathan and Rachelle Jenkins at the birth of their fifth child, Oscar Nathan born on February 12th in Wellman, IA

WANTED

Wanted: In October of 2005 we began "An Extreme MakeOver of the Manse" including a DVD of the demolition of the old interior. I have searched high and low and been unable to locate a copy of that DVD. See Sally if you have a copy.

DOORWAY TO HOPE STAFF

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