

# Sing

*June 25, 2023*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

Psalm 95:1-11; Acts 16:25-34; Ephesians 5:15-20

### **Session Outline**

1. Called to Sing (Ephesians 5:15-20)
2. Power in Singing (Acts 16:25-34)
3. A Heart That Sings (Psalm 95:1-11)

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### **Theological Theme**

Singing to the Lord in worship is a vital practice for the church. When God's people lift their voices to worship in song, powerful things happen.



## Leader Guide

# Sing

### Introduction

Preferences for worship styles exist on a broad range from contemporary to traditional. This topic raises strong feelings in many and often plays a role in how people decide on where they will attend church services. No matter the preference of style, worship matters to a body of believers because it matters to God.

From the inception of the church, worship has been a vital part of believers gathering. Regardless of style, the goal is always to glorify and worship the Lord. Whether we prefer to do that through hymns or modern worship songs, the key is that God's people take time to worship Him. This was a precedent set by the early church and an example given by believers throughout the Bible.

- ❓ What is your favorite worship/singing style? What is your go-to worship song?
- ❓ How does worship through song stir your affections for God in a unique way?

### Session Summary


Believers have long expressed their faith through singing to the Lord. Throughout the Bible, you can find examples of worshipful singing, and this has been a practice of the church since its inception.

Singing in response to who God is and what He has done invites the power of God to earth. Paul and Silas experienced the power of God at work through singing as they chose to lift their voices in praise despite being imprisoned. Singing is an enduring practice of the church and is one way we express our faith in the Lord.

## 1. Called to Sing (Ephesians 5:15-20)


This passage focuses on the characteristics of a Spirit-filled life. Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus as a means of encouragement and challenge the Ephesian church needed at that time. While originally written to a different audience, the message remains relevant to believers today. We are constantly bombarded with false teachings and aggressive information from the enemy set according to the world's rapidly declining standards. Anyone who wants to live wisely as a Christ follower should take Paul's words to heart.

Making a comparison between a fool and a wise person, Paul laid out what it takes to be considered wise and how our daily decisions affect this. First, he talked about time. Many people live as if there is an endless supply of time, and they can put off doing what God tells them to do for another day. According to these verses, we must choose to take advantage of every opportunity we receive to bring glory to God. After all, we may never have that opportunity again.

-  Why does a wise person make the most of every opportunity? When was a time you took a God given opportunity when prompted by the Holy Spirit? When was a time you felt you missed an opportunity given by God?

Paul also wrote about walking in the light and being aware of what we fill our lives with. He plainly stressed that being filled with the Spirit is the better choice. Whatever you fill up with is what will come out of your life. That means it matters what you allow or invite into your heart, mind, and life. If you want to live in a way that glorifies God and has a kingdom impact, you need to fill yourself with things of the Lord.

For those seeking to assess what kind of life they are living, Paul gave a summation of what a spirit-filled life is marked by—worship and thanksgiving. When we are filled with the Spirit, we will have a strong desire to praise the Lord and encourage others to join us. Singing in worship is not dependent on the quality of our voices; it is about naturally praising the Lord because of who He is in your life and what He has done for you. This type of response can be individual or corporate, spontaneous or ordered.

-  How have you seen that what you “fill up” with marks what comes out of your life? Give an example.

### Be Filled By the Spirit

The Spirit's fullness is demonstrated in spiritual understanding, praise, and thanksgiving that are constant and comprehensive. The church that is filled with the Spirit will be characterized by praise and thanksgiving to God. Beyond that there will be evidence of self-control, mutual encouragement, and mutual submission, which are the opposite of rudeness, haughtiness, and self-assertion.

Paul talked about worshiping through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The wise, Spirit-filled believer will have a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving for the Lord. When you recognize all God has done for you and how undeserving you are for the grace you've received, it is hard to hold that in. Our gratitude and worship are often expressed by lifting our voices in song to the Lord.

- Application: How can making worship in song a priority help you make the most of the time you've been given and live wisely before the Lord?

## 2. Power in Singing (Acts 16:25-34)

This account of Paul and Silas is one example of the power in singing and lifting our praises to God. They had been arrested, beaten, and thrown into prison for doing good and healing people. It was unfair and undeserved, yet they did not let it get them down. Imagine being chained in a prison cell but being so filled with joy you couldn't help but start a worship service!


- What is your typical response when something bad or unfair happens in your life? Complaining or praising? How might singing help you move toward worship in these moments?

That is exactly what happened with these two men of God. Many times, we find it easy to praise God and experience gratitude when everything is going right in our lives. We recognize that God is the giver of all good things and positively witness about all He has done and is doing. That is great and the right thing to do. We should be vocal with our praise when we are overflowing with gratitude and seek to give the Lord glory.


But how often do we overflow with gratitude and praise for the Lord when we face difficult situations like Paul and Silas? Are you one who praises God in the good times but blames Him in the tough times? If so, you are missing out on a vital concept of faith and the enduring joy of a Spirit-filled life. Anyone can be happy in pleasant circumstances, but joy comes from within a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Think about the effect Paul and Silas's worship had on the other prisoners. Instead of hearing two men groaning and complaining about what happened, they heard praise and worship.

This gave a testimony to the people around them, including the jailer. And it remains a testimony to us reading this account all these years later. What we see from Paul and Silas is the power in lifting songs of praise to the Lord. It is not a coincidence that a great earthquake happened as they

were singing. While we may not experience an earthquake or a similar outward sign, God is pleased with our worship and is faithful to move among us in these moments.

 When have you experienced the power of God at work through the praises of His people?


Theologians believe the earthquake that night was supernatural in nature. This confidence is based on the timing, location, and severity that caused the chains to loosen and the doors to open. Just as God worked supernaturally in that situation, He also can work powerfully in our lives today. The lost world keeps an eye on believers when they face trials and persecution. What do you think would happen if more Christ followers responded as Paul and Silas did? What if we continually praised the Lord in worship regardless of what was happening in our lives? Living this way gives a testimony that glorifies God like with Paul and Silas.

 Application: What will you do to be intentional about giving a testimony of praise regardless of your circumstances going forward? (Remember Jeremiah 29:11)

### 3. A Heart That Sings (Psalm 95:1-11)

The Psalms are a great place to go when you want to worship the Lord, offering His own powerful words back to Him. In Psalm 95, there are numerous descriptions of ways that we can worship and praise the Lord.

One of the truths to pull from this Psalm is a heart that is right with the Lord will sing in worship. This is a reminder of the same thing Paul wrote in Ephesians. When you are filled with the Spirit and walking with the Lord, joy and praise will overflow from your heart as evidence of this. Praise is about the state of your heart, not the quality of your voice.

 When is a time the Psalms spoke to you or gave you the words you needed to worship?

Note the various forms of worship that the writer listed in the beginning of this Psalm. Singing in community is one of the first things mentioned. The psalmists use of “us” implies that there is value in singing together as a body of believers. Although singing is not the only way to give glory, honor, and praise to the Lord, it is an important way. As our worship is unto the Lord and all about the Lord, it fulfills the purpose for which it was intended. The church is to be diligent in keeping the focus of our worship on God alone and nothing of self or the world.

The psalmist moved into a description of the greatness of God a right perspective on God is one key to making sure our singing and worship are in the right attitude and manner. Recognizing the vastness of the Lord helps us properly worship Him. Passages like this one build a sense of awe and wonder in us that fuel worship.

- ❓ What of the psalmist's description of God's greatness stands out to you most and why?

Verse 6 reminds us that worshiping the Lord in a right manner always includes humility. We are human beings who are limited in our strength, fallible in nature, and in need of grace. Recognizing our dependence on the Lord is vital in having a heart of worship that responds appropriately to Him. In verses 8-11, the psalmist made clear God's feelings about His people whose hearts were not right with Him. This passage is another that emphasizes that having a right heart before God results in right praise, singing, and worship.

- ❓ Application: What do you need to change to get your heart right with God?

## Conclusion

Many places in Scripture give clear instruction on how to live the Christian life. We all have the choice to live like a wise person or a fool. In addition to making the most of every opportunity to bring glory to God, Paul gave other specific ways of wise living. One indicator of walking with the Lord that Paul shared was singing in praise and worship. Developing the habit of singing praises to the Lord is one means of making good use of the time we are given by God.

There are more benefits to singing in worship than some might imagine. Paul and Silas showed what can happen when believers are devoted to praise and singing even during trying times. It is easy to praise the Lord when things are going well in your life. The account of Paul and Silas in Acts 16 reminds us of the power of worshiping God in singing when times are hard. We are called to praise Him regardless of our circumstances. The result is a testimony to those around us.

The Psalms give many examples of praise and worship, in good times and bad. One of the primary forms of worship in the psalms is corporate singing. We are called to be in community with other believers and to worship together in song. Psalm 95 indicates that singing in praise and worship is evidence of a heart that is right with God.

- ① How do you most often live out the call to worship God in song?
- ① How have today's study changed or challenged your perspective on singing in worship?
- ① How might singing give us opportunities to share the gospel with others?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank God for who He is. Spend time reflecting on things about Him that are worthy of your praise. Confess any ways that you tend to complain instead of praise when things get tough in your life. Ask Him to give you a worshipful heart that overflows with songs of praise.*

## Prayer Prompts:

Reflect on these thoughts in your prayer time

- Do you sing in worship with other believers? Why or why not? Pray through your thoughts on this.
- Pray through a Psalm or reflect on the words of one of your favorite worship songs, praising God as you do so.

## Additional Resources

- *Sing* by Keith and Kristyn Getty
- *Rhythms of Grace* by Mike Cospers
- *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* by Tony Merida

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples



### Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

\*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC



## For Next Week

### Memorize

*But be filled by the Spirit: speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord.*

-Ephesians 5:18b-19

# Historical Context of Ephesians

## Purpose

The apostle Paul taught that Jewish and Gentile believers are one in Christ. This oneness was to be demonstrated by their love for one another. Paul used the noun or verb form of love (agapē) nineteen times (about one-sixth of the total uses in all the Pauline letters). Ephesians begins with love (1:4–6) and ends with love (6:23–24).

## Author

Paul referred to himself by name as the author of the book of Ephesians in two places (1:1; 3:1). Many regard this book as the crown of all of Paul's writings. Today some scholars think the book contains a writing style, vocabulary, and even some teachings that are not typical of the apostle. If that is the case, then it would mean a disciple of Paul had surpassed him in theological insight and spiritual perception. Of such an erudite disciple the early church has no record. Furthermore, pseudonymity (writing under someone else's name) probably was not practiced by early Christians. We can conclude, in line with the indisputable acceptance of Pauline authorship in the early church, that there is no reason to dispute the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

## Setting

Paul penned the letter while in prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Disagreement exists concerning whether Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (Ac 24:22) around AD 57–59 or in Rome (Ac 28:30) in about 60–62 when he wrote this letter. Tradition suggests that Paul wrote the letter from Rome around AD 60–61 which would have transpired while Paul was under house arrest in guarded rental quarters (Ac 28:30). Paul most likely wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians during the same imprisonment.

## Special Features

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is an anthem to the sovereign grace of God displayed toward sinners in Christ. It contains some of the worst news ("you were dead in your trespasses and sins") and best news ("but God . . . made us alive with Christ") in all of Scripture. In view of this grace, Paul calls believers to "live worthy of the calling" we have received.

## Extended Commentary

### **Ephesians 5:15-20**

Holy Living (4:17–5:21)

In this very practical and challenging section Paul focused on holy living. Believers are to walk in purity as well as unity. The apostle first showed negatively how believers should not walk. Then he provided positive aspects of Christian conduct.

Paul distinguished between those characterized by rebellion, obstinacy, and darkened understanding and those who respond to Jesus Christ as both subject and teacher. The first group is called the “old self” or unregenerate self. The second group is called the “new self.” Paul exhorted believers to live out the reality of their new position with an inward renunciation and restoration.

The conclusion of chapter 4 includes ethical exhortations grounded in theological truth. Believers are to rid themselves of vices like “bitterness,” “anger,” and “slander” and instead imitate the compassionate kindness of Christ.

Believers are to walk in love, please God by avoiding evildoers, and walk in wisdom. The church is enabled to do this by the empowering (filling) of the Holy Spirit. When this happens, believers can together praise God, constantly offer thanksgiving in all things, and mutually submit one to another.<sup>1</sup>

### **Acts 16:25-34**

Converting a Jailer’s Household (16:25–34).

Like the apostles before them (5:17–21), Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered from their confinement, by an earthquake in the night. Also, like the apostles, they did not flee, but remained at the scene to bear witness. The jailer expected to lose his life for loss of the prisoners. Instead, he gained life, true life in Christ through the witness of Paul and Silas. They witnessed to all his household. All were baptized. Joy filled their home.<sup>2</sup>

### **Psalms 95:1-11**

Because God is sovereign over all, we must submit to His demand for obedience. Hebrews 3:7–4:11 expounds this psalm in detail.<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. Holman Concise Bible Commentary, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

## Author Bio

### Keith and Kristyn Getty (Sing!)

Keith and Kristyn Getty occupy a unique space in the world of music as [pre-eminent] modern hymn writers and global ambassadors for the genre. Perhaps best-known for the modern hymn, “In Christ Alone” (written by Keith with Stuart Townend), the Gettys have helped reinvent the traditional hymn form, creating a catalog of songs teaching Christian doctrine and crossing musical genres, and invigorate the interest of a whole new generation of people in hymns. Their Sing! campaign is part of a movement to encourage church congregations in their singing. Keith and Kristyn live between Northern Ireland and Nashville with their daughters, Eliza, Charlotte, and Grace.

### Mike Cospers (Rhythms of Grace)

Mike Cospers is the executive director of Harbor Media, a non-profit media company serving Christians in a post-Christian world. He served for sixteen years as a pastor at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and is the author of *Recapturing the Wonder*, *The Stories We Tell*, and *Rhythms of Grace*. He lives with his family in Louisville, Kentucky.

### Tony Merida (Exalting Jesus in Ephesians)

Tony Merida is lead pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, NC, and associate professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC.