

Why Are Contemporary Worship Songs so Repetitive?

By Bruce Smith, Music Director Genesis United Methodist Church (Edited by Pastor Jim)

This is a common question and sometimes even complaint, about contemporary worship music, and it is asked primarily because there is such a defined difference between this music and the traditional hymns of the church. So it makes sense to ask this question.

The answer is found in the difference in function of hymns in worship and that of contemporary songs. Hymns are really a part of the liturgy of the worship service and therefore are primarily meant to share theology, statement of faith and to follow the flow of the liturgical service components.

Hymns are structured with verses and sometimes choruses and are often packed with 4 to 6 verses containing the historical, poetic and theological expressions of the Church. As such, hymns have a more structured function in the worship service and they fill that placement extremely well.

Contemporary worship music has a vastly different function. In a contemporary worship environment, the service is comprised primarily of "Worship and the Word," (i.e. singing and preaching). Therefore, in fully contemporary worship there really is no liturgical format to follow. In place of this liturgical format is placed an experiential format that many of the contemporary worship songs try to illicit. The purpose of most contemporary worship music is to experience the presence of God, to live in the moment of telling God we love Him, trust Him, honor Him and thank Him, etc. In "experiencing" these times of worship, the desired impact is that as one sings the words, one is focusing on where one's heart is in relationship to God.

For instance, if you are singing: **"How great is our God, sing with me, how great is our God, and all will sing how great, how great is our God."** Your thoughts will be reflecting on the ways God has demonstrated to you His greatness (i.e. how He healed you, or a loved one from a terrible illness, rescuing you from a terrible situation, healing a bad relationship, etc.).

Of if you are singing: **"And I ... I'm desperate for You; And I ... I'm lost without You!"** Your thoughts are reflecting on the specific desperate need you have for Jesus in your everyday life and how lost you would be without Him guiding, caring and loving over you.

The choruses are repetitive also to allow us to focus on these single relationship themes without being distracted by wordy and complex symbolism. It is far too simplistic and incorrect to say that hymns are for "the head" while contemporary songs are for "the heart." The truth is there are many hymns that stir the heart and some contemporary songs that get people to think.

The impact of contemporary worship is that you are actively engaged in the emotional and

relational content of the songs you are singing—not the detached singing that can often be done when singing a very familiar liturgical piece. How many times have you sung the liturgical hymn “Create In Me A Clean Heart, O God,” and not even think about the words you are singing? Yes, very familiar contemporary songs can have the same effect, because as humans we know, “Familiarity Breeds Contempt.”

In contemporary worship songs, the words try to help you give yourself over to the expression of your real relationship with Christ at that moment. The repetition of words and phrases work to tenderize our hearts as we stand before a loving and forgiving God.

In that moment, we just want to “simmer” and not really move on, but to bathe in God’s presence with His love and mercy and our responding to that Great God’s Goodness with expressions of our love, joy, trust and thankfulness. In order to accomplish this “simmering” the choruses are repeated to allow for those holy moments.

Contemporary worship songs have purposefully repetitious moments, all for the sake of giving you the opportunity to reflect on God’s love for you and then to express back to God what that means to you. It’s our opportunity to be “in the moment” with the living God.

St. Paul encourages us to “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God, the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-20).

Your Pastor Jim



The next **“Walk through the Bible”** Class will be May 13th at either 1 pm or 7 pm. We will finish our study of the Book of Job, as he helps us make sense of our suffering.

Our second class in May will be on May 27th and begin our study of the Book of Psalms. We will have one more Walk through the Bible” on June 10th and then break for the summer months.

Coming Teaching Events

There is much confusion today over the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

On Sunday, May 18th at 7 pm, Pastor Jim will set the record straight and teach you the 32 names and meanings of the Holy Spirit, His Person and Work.

You won't want to miss this study!

Historical Snapshot of the Bible

In one evening, see the complete sweep of Biblical History.

On Sunday, June 8th at 7 pm, Pastor Jim will take you through the Grand Plan of God from creation and Fall into Sin to God’s solution in Jesus Christ.

1. God’s Original Plan
2. Humanity’s Sin Failure
3. God’s Ultimate Solution

Summer Bible Study Opportunities

Once again, Pastor Jim will be offering Summer Bible School for Adults. This summer, Pastor Jim will be offering a variety of studies that hopefully will enrich and mature your Bible's understanding. For your convenience, Pastor Jim will be offering both an afternoon session and an evening session for these classes. To register for any class, or all the classes, see the registration blank enclosed. Registration is due 2 weeks before the class begins and payment of registration fee \$10 is due on the class' first session. If assistance is needed to pay for materials, please speak to Pastor Jim privately.

Study #1—First-Century Judaism

The first study will be the nature and teachings of Judaism in the First Century. What was Judaism like into which our Savior came? Why did He seemingly have so much trouble with the established religious leaders? Who were the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Scribes?

This class is a "two class session" and will be offered Tuesday and Wednesday, June 24-25, 2014 at 1 pm or 7 pm. You **will need to register for this class** at least two week before the first class so that materials can be prepared. Each student will receive a study booklet and pre-reading for \$10.00. Couples may share a set of materials if you desire.

After you register for this class, Pastor Jim has prepared a pre-reading packet that will help you get ready for this study. Please see Pastor Jim for this pre-reading packet.

Study #2—The Gospel of Matthew

The second study this summer will be the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew, who as a Jew, wrote for the Jewish people and therefore he quoted more Old Testament Scriptures than all the other Gospel writers combined. For Matthew, Jesus was the Christ, the long awaited Messiah of the Jewish people. Learn how this unique approach showed how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures and is in truth the Messiah.

This class is a "two class session" and will be offered Tuesday and Wednesday, July 16-17 at 1 pm or 7 pm for your convenience. You **will need to register for this class** at least two week before the beginning of the class. Cost for materials is \$10/set and a couple may share materials if they wish.

After you register for this class, Pastor Jim has prepared a pre-reading packet that will help you get ready for this study. Please see Pastor Jim for this pre-reading packet.

Study #3—The Gospel of Luke

The third class will be on the Gospel of Luke. Luke, himself a Gentile, wrote his Gospel for the Gentiles. His favorite descriptive term for Jesus was the "Son of Man," which comes from the Old Testament. Why this emphasis? Luke's Gospel is unique in that it is for all mankind.

This class is a "two class session" offered on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 19th and 20th at 1 pm or 7 pm. You **will need to register for this class** and materials are \$10/set. A couple may share one set.

After you register for this class, Pastor Jim has prepared a pre-reading packet that will help you get ready for this study. Please see Pastor Jim for this pre-reading packet.

Registration for Summer Bible Studies

Registration for Summer Bible Studies is necessary that enough materials are available for each participant. Registration deadline is 2 week prior to the beginning of each study. Registration costs of \$10 are due at the first class. Please keep the top half of this registration form for your records, and return the bottom portion to register. After you do register, please see Pastor Jim for your pre-reading packet to get ready for each study. Thank you.

Study #1—First-Century Judaism

Dates: Tuesday and Wednesday June 24th & 25th, 2014

Times: Either at 1:00 PM or 7:00 PM - Cost: \$10.00/per set of materials.

Study #2—The Gospel of Matthew

Dates: Tuesday and Wednesday, July 15th & 16th, 2014

Times: Either at 1:00 PM or 7:00 PM - Cost: \$10.00/per set of materials.

Study #3—The Gospel of Luke

Dates: Tuesday and Wednesday, August 19th & 20th, 2014

Times: Either at 1:00 PM or 7:00 PM - Cost: \$10.00/per set of materials.

Name _____ Best Phone _____

Please check mark the studies that wish to attend, number of people attending and the number of sets of materials desired. Couples may share materials. After registering, please see Pastor Jim for your pre-reading packet to prepare for our study. This pre-reading will get you ready for each study.

Study #1—First-Century Judaism

Number of people attending _____ Number of Material Sets _____

Study #2—The Gospel of Matthew

Number of people attending _____ Number of Material Sets _____

Study #3—The Gospel of Luke

Number of people attending _____ Number of Material Sets _____

Please return this portion to Church Office or to Pastor Jim

Servant Event in Caldwell, Ohio – August 3-8, 2014

Pastor Jim will be heading up a building project and joining the group from Hosanna Lutheran Church of Columbia Station and the H.A.R.P. Mission and traveling to Southern Ohio. If you would like to participate the cost is \$150/person plus a \$50 gift card from Lowe's, Home Depot or Wal-Mart, which will be used to purchase the necessary supplies for the service project.

The event begins on Sunday, August 3rd at 3 pm and will end on Friday, August 8th at noon. Room and Board is provided for each volunteer. If interested, please speak to Pastor Jim to get the necessary application and medical forms which will need to be filled out. We will car pool down to the site.

Can't participate but still want to help? You can donate gift cards and/or cash to be used to purchase the needed supplies for the projects. Gift cards in any denomination from Lowe's, Home Depot and Wal-Mart will be accepted. Simply drop them off in the Church Lobby in the box provided. The display and box will not be up until April 1st. For more information or questions you can talk with Pastor Jim or contact Pastor Gary Richard at 440-309-8252 or email him at revgrichard@gmail.com.



The H.A.R.P. Mission

Servant Event

“Blessed to Be a Blessing!”

I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20: 35

**Coordinated by: The H.A.R.P. Mission
810 Main Street, Caldwell, OH. 43724**

Church groups and individuals will provide home maintenance, repair, wheelchair ramps and other help for families in crisis, disabled, widowed, elderly, and Veterans.

**Learn how to repair and rebuild homes for families destroyed by disasters.
Experience discipleship and share Jesus' love with others.**

**WHEN: Check-in Sunday, Aug. 3, 3:00 PM
WHERE: The warehouse in Caldwell.**

**Projects will be worked on each day - Monday, August 4 through Friday, August 8
COST: \$150 PER PERSON Plus \$50 Gift Card
Registration includes food and lodging**

Registration forms: Pastor Jim has all the registration forms. Just ask!