



## Spiritual Vitality: The Power of Song

Matt Chandler – February 18, 2018

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Good morning. How are we? Doing well? If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Psalm 150 today. I'll use some other texts, but that'll be our primary text. Before we get started, I want us to spend just a moment praying for the longest tenured members of The Village Church. Tiff and Dorene Cothran have been members of TVC for 28 years. Yeah, you can celebrate that, because that's unusual.

Across that 28 years, they have served in almost every capacity at our church. They served in the nursery well before it was called Little Village. Then they served among elementary school, and then they served among youth, and then they led Home Groups, and then their daughter actually became one of the first children's ministers of this church. They have just faithfully...

Even as they aged... Tiff is 85 now. I think Dorene is maybe a year older than that at 86. Even as they aged, they tried to find places in which they could serve. For the last few years they have been greeters. They have just stood at the door and smiled at you and welcomed you in. They are a picture of a couple that has owned this church. "This is *my* church, and wherever I see a need I'm going to fill that need." They've done it for 28 years.

The reason I'm laying that before you is that Tiff has had, in my time... He had his first heart surgery before I got here, and he has had two since I *have* been here, and in the last one I went over to his house just a few days before the surgery to pray with him and Dorene. As we prayed, there was just a lot of fear about whether his body was going to be able to hold up against this next surgery and whether or not he was going to make it out of that surgery.

Tiff just wanted to live to April where he could celebrate 65 years of marriage with Dorene. How incredible. I can't even get my head around 65 years of marriage. He came through that surgery, did survive that surgery, although once the recovery period had finished, the level at which his heart

has been able to beat healthy blood through his system is really low, operating now at about 20 to 25 percent, which makes him very weak and unable to operate in ways he really wants to operate.

Then about three weeks ago, in one of the more crazy, weird, "What is that?" kind of things, they found an infection in Tiff's shoulder that ended up being E. coli. So he was in ICU for nine days, in and out of consciousness, and on multiple occasions they thought it was over. So we've been in and out of there praying.

His wife Dorene (like I said, 86 or 87 years old) has refused to leave. *Stubborn* is not the right word. I'm not sure the word to use where you have this 86- or 87-year-old woman going, "I'm not leaving." "You're frail. You need to eat." "I don't care. I'm not leaving." Falling asleep standing up. Not leaving as she stood by her husband's side.

Finally another family from our church went up there and said, "Dorene, you have to get some sleep. You have to get something to eat. We will stay here. Go home." Then Dorene fell asleep and got in a car accident on the way home and broke a part of her pelvis, and now she is in another hospital, not the same hospital as Tiff, and Tiff has, over the last 72 hours, started to decline rapidly.

So I want, before we dive into the preaching of the Word this morning, to pray for Tiff and Dorene Cothran that God would hear Tiff's heart cry to make it to April. What a beautiful prayer request looking at, "Hey, I might not wake up from this." It wasn't, "Oh, let me be with my grown children and grandchildren." It's, "Man, I just want to celebrate year 65."

So I want to pray over Tiff, and I want you to join me. I know if you're at one of our other campuses this might be weird and you're like, "Who's Tiff?" He's a long-time brother. Anything good here at The Village Church was wrought, in some ways, to Tiff and Dorene Cothran wetting the floor with their tears, asking the Spirit of God to do something at this church when this church was a hundred people.

He actually worked with his hands to build our very first building ever. If you've been to the Martin Building over there, that was literally built with the hands of our members, Tiff being one of those who led the charge. So let's pray for him, and then I want to begin to unpack where we're going today.

Father, I thank you for Tiff and Dorene Cothran. I thank you for a picture of faithfulness that spans decades, that through their highs and through their lows their trust has been in you. We thank you for how they love this church with all of the changes that have occurred in this place over 28 years. They've always owned this church. They have seen it as *their* church. They have seen the weaknesses of this church as opportunities to serve.

So I thank you for good pictures, good models, good people to look at and say, "That's a goal of mine." We ask now, Spirit of the living God, would you touch Tiff's body in this moment? Father, will you strengthen his heart? Will you allow his heart to begin to beat with a ferocity and a rhythm that nourishes his body? Would you bring him into consciousness? Heal his body. Then we pray for our sister Dorene. We just pray that in some supernatural sense you would stabilize her, if only to be moved to the hospital next to her husband.

We pray for the emotional stress they're both feeling being apart from one another, and we just selfishly ask, because you're a good and gracious Father, that you would grant this husband and wife their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary so we might celebrate as a body the reality that you sustain those whose hope is in you. We ask for our brother and sister... Sustain them. We thank you for their example and pray for your power. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

We are a church that tends to preach through series. We'll preach through the book of Exodus or we'll take a topic and do 12 weeks on a topic, so it's a really rare thing for me to have a weekend that's just sitting there, a stand-alone weekend with nothing actually planned. Even now, next week is another stand-alone sermon, and then we move into 12 weeks on the kingdom of God, where we begin to look at God's dynasty, his dominion over the created order. For 12 weeks, we're going to marvel at the kingdom of God.

Then there's this one stand-alone sermon, and then during the summer we're going to look at 1 Corinthians 12-14 and look at the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they work in the church. Not just the sign gifts but *all* of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and how we're to think about those and operate in those. Then there will be a stand-alone, and then we'll be in the gospel of John right up until Advent, and then we'll preach through Advent, then we'll preach through Epiphany, and we'll be right back here.

See what I'm saying? There are just not a lot of these sermons that allow me to look out at where we are as a congregation and encourage something I see and call it out all the more. The last four or

five weeks have been this unique season for me, where I'm not in a series, but I get to look at us and go, "This is good. I want more of it." Two weeks ago, we talked about what it meant to be a man, that we aren't to give ourselves over to this machismo "I don't feel; I do. I don't have to be."

Nor do we have to give ourselves over to "There's no difference; we're all supposed to just love God," but we can embrace distinct masculinity in a way that does not result in inequality. In fact, I said then and I'll say it again: women on our exec team and leading out in classes is a sign of healthy masculinity. I wanted to call that up and call that out and encourage it, because I'm seeing it. I want to see it all the more.

Then last week, when Beau shared the testimony of the Denton Campus becoming the Denton Church, I wanted us to hear and be encouraged around two things. First, that roll-off leads to healthy, highly contextualized gospel outposts that are doing the work of ministry in their given locations and seeing a great deal of fruit. I also wanted you to hear the testimony of what happens when the people of a given church own the church as though it's *their* church and not the *staff's* church. Those are different things.

For a people to say, "This is the staff's church. We're their guests. Let them host us" is very different than what Beau was describing when he said, "No, no. We realized if the work of ministry was going to get done it would have to be us, the people, who actually did it," so they would own the work of ministry in a unique and right way. I wanted you to hear that. That leads me to *this* weekend, which is one more stand-alone where I want to encourage something and point us all the more to it.

It might seem weird to you that this is a burden of mine, but let me lay it before you. This weekend, I am hopeful we might grow in our capacity and our delight in singing songs both to God and with one another. Let me do this. Let me set my Bible over here. Does everybody understand what's happening? Inerrant, authoritative Word of God over *here*. I'm just standing over *here*, mistake-prone, foolish, at times cocky, sometimes moronic. (I'm not using any more. I'm not giving you any more than that.)

There's something about singing that, humanly speaking, is profound and powerful. Across all of the domains of social anthropology, social scientists would say music does something to human beings physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We are creatures that need to and love to be around music and participate in it at some level. Now, we cannot, as Bible-believing Christians, see that merely

through the lens of common grace: this is a good gift given to all humankind, because God is good even toward those who don't love him.

We must consider that the creator God of the universe has given a gift to his people for their good and their joy and his glory. God is serious about singing, and that alone should incite some curiosity in us. God himself sings. Zephaniah 3. He sings over us. Do you know singing is mentioned 400 times in the Bible, 50 of those as commands? Fifty times the Bible commands the people of God to sing.

Again, that should create some curiosity in us. Like, why? We know it's not that God is having a tough time and needs to be encouraged. It's not like God is like, "Man! This is harder than I thought. Someone say something good about me and put it to a nice melody." We know this is not the God of the Bible. He's not prone to melancholy.

"Do you know what I really need? I need someone to praise me right now or I'm not sure I can finish what I started." We know that's not the God of the Bible. So what's happening in these 50 commands and these 400 mentions? Let's read a passage I'm hoping to unpack more and more as we work our way through this sermon. Psalm 150, starting in verse 1.

**"Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance..."** I know we're Baptists. I'm just going to muscle through. **"...praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!"**

Just my cards on the table. Singing can oftentimes seem ancillary to me. Here's what I mean. If I'm looking out at the brokenness of our world, and tell me we didn't have a front-row seat to demonic evil this week in our country... I'm looking at that. I'm looking at poverty. I'm looking at injustice. I'm looking at broken social systems, and then I see 50 commands to sing? How about we get in the fight? How about we serve the least of these? How about we learn to walk in generosity? How about we learn to evangelize? Really? Fifty times, "Sing"?

It doesn't help that I'm not good at it. I can make a joyful noise, and it is not pleasant. I became a Christian at a time in the church, specifically in the United States, that there was this tipping point

happening in regard to singing. (I'll give you a brief history because it's not my point.) There was a revival that broke out in California in the 70s. I know that's hard for us Texans, but that's where it started. It was called the *Jesus movement*.

A bunch of hippies caught Jesus and freaked out and started sharing the gospel, and then they planted this series of churches called the Vineyard Churches. Then all of these choruses began to be written and started spreading across the United States. So churches started to wrestle with, for the first time in hundreds of years, whether or not they were going to do hymns or choruses. This led to the great worship wars of the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Anybody get to live through those? Yeah. You're giggling, but churches split over this. New services were born. Churches started going, "Our contemporary service is at 9:00. Traditional is at 11:15." I was saved in a church that actually split over this issue. What's the right thing to sing? Do we sing hymns or do we sing choruses? Do we use hymnals or do we, as my grandmother says, wall sing? What is it? What are we going to do?

On top of this great debate in what I knew as "big church," there was a way college students were beginning to interact with singing and preaching that was different than the churches they grew up in. Across the universities of the United States, there sprung up these Bible studies that were packed with thousands of college students, and the format was something like this: sing for an hour, loudly, with a lot of instruments, and then preach for 45 minutes, and then sing for another hour and a half. It was expressive, it was loud, and it was chorus-driven.

I found myself becoming a Christian right in the middle of all of this building, which is, if you look at it, a unique season in the American church, where I think there was a revival going on in regard to how we think about and interact with the Bible and singing. In fact, per my confession at being terrible at this, at the Passion Conference in Austin in 1997... I think 4,000 to 6,000 college students, so high on zeal, low on intelligence. (If you're a college student, I'm not dogging you. You're just 20-something. I love you. You're great. You're going to be fine. Just right now you're really excited about stuff, and I love that about you.)

I'm at Passion '97. I don't know if I was in the third heaven or not, but I was *in*. It was Sam Perry on the keys, and I was singing "Shout to the Lord" or "You Are My All in All" by Dennis Jernigan. I was just there. I mean, hands up, and I'm just going for it. Then I looked up, and there was this young

woman in front of me who actually was a member of The Village for a while before they moved. I don't want to out her.

When I opened up my eyes, she had turned around and was staring right at me. Once she realized I could see her, she just shook her head. Just totally quenched the Spirit. So I fell out of the third heaven and back onto normal ground. So I'm saying all I'm saying today, acknowledging I don't need to be singing background vocals. At the most, what you're going to hear me do is start the Doxology until you fill in, turn off my mic, and back out.

It just isn't my strength, not my space, not my lane, and yet 50 times in the Bible God says, "Sing. You sing. You sing." He's not doing that because *he* needs it. So what's happening? Let's talk about that. One sentence, and then I want to prove it. *There is spiritual power unleashed when the people of God sing.* Let's talk about that. Three points under that sentence.

First, *the power to remember and repent is unleashed when the people of God sing.* Let me show you this text. It's Deuteronomy 31:21. It's a fascinating discussion between God and Moses, where God is acknowledging, "I know my children. They're stiff-necked. They're disobedient. Before I even get you into the land I promised you you're going to rebel against me, and yet I'm going to inception something in your brain and in your heart and I'm going to put it in your children, and it's going to confront you." Let me show you this.

**"And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give."** So how does God plan to ambush his people in their rebellion with compassion? How does he plan to lovingly confront them? With a song he puts in their hearts that their kids won't be able to forget.

Now how does this practically work? Here's how I think this practically works. I think when the saints of God come together and we give ourselves over to joyful praise, those who are wayward or weak will hear our praise and be confronted with the glory of God in remembrance. I think as the people of God gather and joyfully sing, people who are wayward or weak will hear our praise, see the words we are singing, and remember and be confronted. This is one of the ways God loves his people. This is unleashed when the people of God sing.

Now although we're using the word *confronted* here, because that's the word in the text, I also think you'll see singing *comfort* the people of God. Some of you have experienced this. Many of you have heard about this. It is not uncommon for older men and women who are struggling with Alzheimer's or dementia to hear "Amazing Grace," hear "Just As I Am," hear a hymn or a song from yesteryear and return with clarity for a few moments.

I don't know if you've ever seen this, but a shell of a man or a woman, a man or a woman who could no longer recognize their children, doesn't really remember where they are, and is a hollowed-out version of what they once were will hear "Amazing Grace" played on the piano, and they will enter back in and they will sing words and they will be present for a moment that they weren't before the hymn was played. This is power unleashed, remembering in a way that either confronts or comforts, and it's what singing does.

The second thing here... When I'm talking about spiritual power being unleashed when the saints sing, I'm also talking about *singing has the power to integrate us*. Here has been my experience as a pastor. There are some of you... I'm trying to help. Okay? There are some of you who are really rigid and you need rigid things. You *need* it. You came out of the womb type A. You came out of the womb needing order, and you hate that we sing as much as we do.

You're like, "Hey, preach the Book, man! What is all of this? Why are we doing four songs this week? Preach the Book, brother. That's why *I'm* here. You'd better exegete that text. I didn't come here to sing that thing six times in a row. I want the Book." Then there are some of you who are like, "Why do you preach so long? What we need to do is just marinate in the presence of God in song. You preach too long. Cut that sermon back to 25 and add seven songs."

This is a real thing here. Some of you are like, "We sing way, way too much" and others of you are like, "Are you kidding me? Chandler needs to shut up and let us enjoy the Lord." Yet what singing is meant to do is integrate the head and the heart. Look at me. I'm not talking about emotional for emotional's sake. That's called *emotionalism*. That's not what we're after. What we're after is a heart moved by what is true, the integration of head and heart, wooing us out of what we know to be true into an experience of that truth.

This is what C.S. Lewis said praise was. Praise is understanding what is true and then expressing it in praise. Well, how do we express it? Through song. Let me read this text, and I think we need to talk about it. This is Colossians 3:16: "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...**" I love that. Let

it *dwell* in you. Let's steep in the Word together. How many of you have read the Bible in the morning and forgot what you read at lunch? You don't need to raise your hand. Everyone.

What he's saying is, "No. Don't just read it like you're reading a blog or the newspaper. Let it dwell in you richly. Think about it. Meditate upon it. Apply it. Let it dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing, encouraging, edifying, speaking life into, building up, and at times rebuking one another in all wisdom..." Then it seems like it's making a turn, but it's not making a turn. "**...singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**"

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. Be men and women who have steeped in the Word of Christ so that it's *in* you. You don't just know it. It's in your guts. Then teach and admonish and encourage, and then with thankful hearts, sing. Sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs. Let me try to break some of this down, some things I think we need to know.

First, *lyrics matter*. Gordon Fee says, "Show me a church's songs and I'll show you their theology." You will not sing my sermon later this week. You're not going to be in your car and just start singing a sentence from my sermon. You *will* more than likely sing a line from some of the songs we sing here. People with Alzheimer's and dementia don't come back when you play a podcast for them. It's not like they're listening on the iPad and I say, "Are you tracking with me?" and all of a sudden they're back.

That's not how this works. It's music that has this power. It's singing that has this. So singing is about this integration. Here's what I want to talk about when we're talking about lyrics. Again, along these lines of being really rigid (and it's not always a bad thing to be really rigid) or just not rigid at all, there can be these two great errors when it comes to the things we sing. There are ways of walking that aren't helpful.

There has to be room for poetic license in singing. When David says, "As the deer pants for the water," nobody is there going, "You're not a deer. Are you kidding me? David, you make me sick. Do you not know anything? You're a human. Don't compare yourself with a deer. You've been made in the image of God." There has to be some room for poetic license. This is where we're going to disagree at times, because some people feel more comfortable with more poetic license and other people feel less comfortable. This is where we need to be gracious to one another.

But there's also another way we can err, and that's the error of not caring at all what the words are and believing that just because it's a good melody the words don't matter. You have people who are trying to proof-text songs; take one word, one phrase, rip it out of the song, and go, "It's heretical!" Which, by the way, is a really bold word. There's certain criteria that has to be met for something to be heretical, but we just throw that as "We disagree."

So the two great errors are proof-texting songs...not reading the whole song, pulling a phrase out, and going, "This is incorrect..." No, it can be incomplete without being incorrect. Then there's the other side of things. "People love to sing this song. You just shouldn't care about these things." No, no. Our lyrics matter. Now what God is after is men and women who sing passionately because of what is true and, emotively, they express that in song for the good of their own souls and the good of the corporate gathering.

I'm going to read this quote by John Wesley just because I love it. I don't know that it fits neatly in here, but I just thought, "I'm using this quote at some point this week." John Wesley and his brother wrote 6,500 hymns. I sent that to Bleecker this week and was like, "Bro, these brothers wrote 6,500 songs. Where are you at?"

I love the way Wesley puts this. "Sing lustily..." I just love *that*. I could have just read *that*. "...and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of it being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan." Like, "John, man. We like Coldplay, bro."

Here's Wesley's argument. He's confronting this reality that there are certain venues in which we are not ashamed of our voice and we sing with a great deal of oomph. He says, "Don't give God your second best." Don't give Chris Stapleton, don't give Coldplay, don't give whoever you're into your primary passion-filled angst and give God this quiet, meek, "You're great." Wesley is like, "Don't do that." "With the same zeal that you sing the songs of Satan." That's such a strange little... "Songs of Satan." With the same zeal that you do *that*, sing to the Lord.

There's this power unleashed when we sing to remember, to be confronted or comforted, and then there's this power to integrate the head and the heart. I left the last one (because I think it's going to be the most difficult for us) to the last part of the sermon so you won't not hear everything I said at first.

Here's the third thing: *singing unleashes the power of God over demonic oppression*. Let's chat about that. This is a category I think most modern evangelicals in the West have not looked into. I'll tell you what sparked my interest in this sentence I just said. When we baptize (our baptistery is right there under the stage), here's a testimony we hear every time we baptize on a weekend. Someone will get in the water, and here will be their testimony.

"When I pulled into the parking lot, I just got a weird sense that I was home, and then when I walked in and we began to sing... I'd been battling depression. I'd been battling anxiety. I'd been walking in this fog, and as we sang, those things began to lift off of me. They're still a struggle, but they lifted off in a way that I was able to enter in with joy. I was able to listen for the first time to a sermon. I was able to find peace in my heart as we sang to the Lord."

Hearing that testimony once a quarter for 15 years kind of activated in my heart and mind seeing things in the Scripture that were always there, but I just didn't see them because I grew up as a good white Southern Baptist in Texas. Singing has the power to loosen up demonic oppression. So why do we suffer? Why do we lack victorious living? Well, sometimes we just live in a fallen world. The world is broken. Some hardship exists because the world is broken, and the Spirit of God sustains us in that world.

Sometimes we suffer because we've sinned against God or someone else has sinned against God. You do reap what you sow. I'm standing on the stage today as a 43-year-old man who didn't just spontaneously combust onto the stage. I am the result of 20-something years of decisions about whether or not I'm going to submit to Christ, submit to the Word of God, or rebel against it and be my own god. I can just testify to you that in those moments where I have chosen not to follow the Lord there's almost always collateral damage.

So sometimes suffering is that we have sinned or other people have sinned against us. Then there's this third category nobody really wants to talk about because it's weird. That's this category that sometimes we're suffering because of demonic oppression. I know you're like, "Well, I need a verse." I love you for needing a verse, so let me give it to you. First Samuel 16, starting in verse 14, says this: "**Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.**" That should lead you into all kinds of study.

**"And Saul's servants said to him, 'Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is**

**skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well.' So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.'**

**One of the young men answered, 'Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him.'" I pray that over my son. I want those things for my boy. "Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.' And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul.**

**And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.' And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him."**

This is one of many. We could look at the battle of Jericho. Who leads the assault on Jericho? Wasn't it the band? Like you're thinking, "These walls cannot be conquered. What are we going to do? We don't have any weapons. I know! Send the choir." Have you ever read 2 Chronicles 20? I know for many of you it's your favorite passage in the Bible, where you have Jehoshaphat who's bowed down before the Lord and going, "We're not going to survive this next assault from the Amorites. What are we going to do?"

What does God say? "Get up and send out the Kohathites before you," who were the people David had instituted in 1 Chronicles 6 to be the singers and worshipers of God to surround the ark. So God's path to victory over demonic principalities and powers is song. It's a strange thing, and yet when I think about the seasons of my life I've walked in, the greatest joy and greatest freedom from my own bents and iniquities, those seasons are marked by consistently gathering with brothers and sisters and singing and then moving on into praying.

When I became a Christian at this kind of turning point of what was going on, the crew I fell in with... There was a group of Assembly of God kids and a group of Church of Christ kids and then three or four of us Baptist kids, and one of the things we would do is we would get together... There

was a lot of joyful noise that probably would have sounded like something else outside of the room. We didn't play instruments. We would get CDs. (You should Google that. They were awesome.)

We would get CDs and just play a CD and sing along with it. I referenced Dennis Jernigan earlier, because he had that song "You Are My All in All." We would play that CD, and we would sing terribly at the top of our lungs, and then we would pray together. Then we would walk in obedience. That was outside of church. It was across church lines. I think the Church of Christ kids thought we were sinning the whole time. They were like, "Are those instruments? This is not okay."

The Assembly of God kids thought the Baptist kids weren't saved because we weren't speaking in tongues. It was just this kind of weird group but we're singing, we're loving the Lord, and then we're walking in faith. To this day, I think those seasons of my life where I'm walking in the greatest victory... Singing to the Lord with brothers and sisters is a part of not just the weekly gathering but my life outside of the gathering.

Now the English language, specifically what Americans have done to the English language... I'm saying that because Steve Timmis, our CEO of Acts 29, is from England. He speaks the Queen's English. It's a very different language than what we speak. Don't be offended by that. He arrived last night and he said, "Matthew, I have arrived and have ensconced at the hotel." I had to look that up. "What does *ensconced* mean? Oh! He's at the hotel." Then I just said, "Hey, great usage of the word *ensconced*. I had to look it up."

The English language, specifically what *we* have done with it, is we have created an immense amount of junk-drawer words. The burden is on the hearer to figure out what in the world we're talking about. If something is *cool*, you could be referencing the temperature or the swagger of something. You have to hear it in context and then make the decision. Don't get me started on the word *love*. Gosh, what *don't* we love in 2018?

We're not saying the same thing (I hope). Tacos, fajitas, Instagram, our new phone, our wife, our children, our car, work, church, house. "Love." That's junk drawer. The Hebrews and Greeks didn't operate like this. They were nuanced about what exactly they were talking about. Both the Greeks and Hebrews had a ton of different words for *love*, and they had a ton of different words for *praise* or *singing* or what it meant to do this thing we're talking about.

So what I wanted to do today is end by just looking at the seven primary Hebrew words for *praise*, and then what we're going to do is we're going to practice. Let me walk through this. Here's the first Hebrew word for praise: *halal*. Here's what *halal* means: to boast foolishly and make a show of it. Now if you are like me... I was saved at a Southern Baptist church, primarily Anglo, in the South, and this is forbidden.

"Don't you dare make a show of anything. This ain't about you; it's about the Lord. You sit down and be quiet. You nod, *maybe*, but don't nod too much. That's too charismatic for us." I'm serious. I became a Christian where explicitly and implicitly the lesson taught was, "Calm down. You just calm down about the Lord. You are way too out of control. You will outgrow this stage of zeal." Seriously. I'm First Baptist Church of Texas.

If someone said, "Amen" it was a huge distraction to the entire body. "Amen." "Who was that? Somebody brought their crazy aunt from the backwoods of Missouri." If someone raised their hands, a deacon might get involved. "Did you need something? You don't need anything? You good? Okay." You have this word *halal* that basically means to boast, to act foolishly, to make a show of it.

I think the place you see this most viscerally is in the book of Samuel where David is leading the ark of the covenant back into Jerusalem. The presence of God has returned among his people, and David just gets caught up. He strips off his outer garments, and he's singing and dancing, just rejoicing because the presence of God is back.

Then he gets home. He's all sweaty. He has sweated through his ephod. His wife Michal is like, "Are you pleased with yourself? You made a real fool of yourself." Do you remember David's response? "Woman, I'll become even more undignified than this. It was for the Lord I was boasting. I was not boasting for people to see. I don't care about how you perceive me. If I'm a fool, I'm a fool in my enjoyment of God." This is *halal*.

Look at me. You have this gear. Philadelphia Eagles fans, you have this gear. Houston Astros fans, you have this gear. Cubs fans... Good lord, do *you* guys have this gear. "It's been a billion years! Yes!" I thought Philly and Chicago were going to be burned to the ground. That's *halal*. Losing your mind. Over...what? This is *halal*. We have the gear; we've just been taught explicitly and implicitly that God doesn't *want* this gear.

Like God is going, "I'm not that big. Calm down, everybody. I am not that big of a deal. I just saw what Philly did. That was epic. I get it. I don't want that on me. That is far more glorious than anything *I've* done, you know, like creating and managing the known universe and saving you from sin and death forever, but that right there...that's amazing! Oh my gosh! *Sports Illustrated* prophesied the year before that they would win that? I mean, I haven't done anything like that. That's amazing! Yeah, *halal*."

We have this gear; we've just been implicitly and explicitly taught that God doesn't want this. We're wrong. The second Hebrew word, *thillah*, means to praise vocally in song or shouts. Then *zamar* is to praise with instruments alone or with voices. Then this is the one I think you'll be most familiar with: *hallelujah*. Here's a way to think about *hallelujah*. It's a shouting call for corporate praise. It's someone who's leading, crying out "Hallelujah" to get you to enter in.

Whenever I read this word, I always think (and don't boo or hiss or whoop or whatever it is you do) of Texas A&M, and here's why. If you ever go to an Aggie game at Kyle Field, they don't have cheerleaders; they have what they call *yell leaders*. They're wearing these white suits. They look like milkmen, at least what historically have been known as milkmen.

A hundred five thousand people are watching what's supposed to be a good game, and they're hopeful, and it's not going well, and they're not sure what's going to happen, and then these milkmen do something. They make some hand gesture, and as soon as they do that, 105,000 people, laser-like focus, and then they all chant together, willing their team by the love of Christ to win. This is *hallelujah*. This is the milkmen saying, "We need you. Get in here! Be involved in this." *Hallelujah*, a corporate cry or a cry for corporate response.

For you *Star Wars* nerds there's *yadah*. (I'm sorry. I don't know why I do stuff like that. It's me. It's brokenness in me. I'm sorry.) It's to lift or throw arms upward in praise and surrender. I don't have time for all of this, but let's chat. You are an embodied soul. Do you get that? We're not Gnostics. You are an embodied soul. The reason God says, "Lift your hands. Bow down. Shout. Dance. Clap..." It goes back to integration, the head and the heart becoming more and more integrated and that gap closing.

We don't lift up our hands because God has low self-esteem and he really needs to be encouraged after this tough week. No, we lift our hands because something happens in *us* when we lift our hands. We clap not because God needs applause. We clap because we want our spirits and minds

and hearts integrating in such a way that we become the kind of worshiper God would want us to be for our joy and his glory.

This isn't about showmanship. You can clap, shout, lift your hands, dance around like a fool, and be far from God and just making a show of it. None of those kinds of movements make you a mature Christian. We don't get to judge spiritual maturity by someone's external actions but by the kindness of their heart and their love for the Lord in everyday normalcy, not just in how they sing and raise their hands.

Then there's *towdah*, which is to sing praises together as one community in harmony. My guess, if you've ever been to a concert... This is my experience at every concert I've ever been to. Usually there's this one song that makes a band explode onto the scene. That's the big hit, and everybody at the concert is waiting for that big hit to be played. Whoever you love, whatever that song is you love that everybody else loves about that artist, you're just kind of waiting.

They never open with it. In the concert everybody is like, "Come on, man. Do we have to do this? Just get back out here and sing your hit." Then they come out, and 100 percent of the time they will start that song, begin to sing it, get to the chorus, and then what do they do? They bow out and let the crowd sing it, and there is an energy and a force of unity that occurs when all of those voices mingle into one sound. This is what's happening in this word *towdah*.

As we hear one another's voices, we are encouraged and built up in love. We remember that we are not alone. We remember that however crummy or however awesome our week was, we belong to something bigger. It's subtle, it's subversive, and it reminds the soul. That's why it's important that we hear each other's voices. Although we have permission to worship and praise loudly (that's what the text said in Psalm 150; don't email me...loud cymbals even), the primary thing we want to hear is each other and our voices filling the room. It does something to us.

Then lastly, *shabach*, which is to reach out with affection for God, to feel his hold on us. Here's what I was thinking. Wouldn't it be terrible if we taught on all of this and then didn't practice it at all? So we flipped the clock. I don't know if you noticed this, but we normally have a 25-minute clock up front, and it was just 15 minutes so that for the next 15 we could actually try this.

You just have to prepare yourself that the dude behind you might have heard a little bit better than you did and you're about to get something bouncing off the back of your head that might be

distracting or "Good lord! That dude needs lessons." But what I want us to do is try the best we can not to muster anything but to give ourselves over to the 50 commands in the Bible to sing for our own good, for the good of our body, and for the glory of God.

I want us in the weeks to come to grow in this, that we might be known as a church that expresses its love to the Lord boastfully and loudly in song, even if it's a bit off tune. I'm simply going to pray for us, and like I said, we're going to sing for 15 minutes, and then here at this campus I'm going to come back out, and I'll close us with Communion. I'll just pray that singing becomes more a part of your life, in your car, with your family, at the house, over your children, that song might become an atmosphere you create in your own homes. Let me pray for us.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I thank you for the gift of song. Thank you for how it builds up our hearts. Thank you for how it encourages us. Thank you for how it even emboldens us to pray. I pray even now, as we enter into 15 minutes of singing to you about how you are the cornerstone, how you never let us down and you never *will* let us down, as we sing about the greatness of your faithfulness, that we not feel like we need to muster anything or perform for anyone but that you would just incite our hearts with what's true about what we're singing, and will you usher us into greater freedom than maybe historically we have?

I thank you we're not talking about singing today as much as we're talking about power. We're not talking about singing as much as we're talking about the power of victorious Christian living, at least one of the tools you've given us. I ask that where there are barriers of being too cool or barriers of not liking our voice or barriers of not really being built that way that we'd be able to surrender to your commands like we would any of your other commands. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.