



Singing with the Understanding

1 Corinthians 14:15

It is imperative that when we sing,
we do so with understanding

1 Corinthians 14:15

Ephesians 5:19

Colossians 3:16

Singing is an act of worship that is
more than sounding good and
musical talents – it is about praising
God and edifying one another

Singing is an avenue through which we teach – therefore, when we sing:

- 1) It must be true to God's word
- 2) We need to understand the message

Tonight, I would like to address the wording of some of the songs we sing

- Some are more obscure or archaic
- Some need scriptural context
- Some need explanation as to whether we should sing them or not

NOTE: Addressing our songs is challenging because we are often dealing with subjective wording – no matter what is said, some are likely to disagree with my conclusions.

The question is: Can we engage in discussions with open minds, Christian love and due respect?

- Our FIRST priority in selecting songs – are they true to God’s word?
 - If a song has an unscriptural message, then we are teaching error
 - **1 Corinthians 14:6-8** – warns about being clear with the words we choose. If a song has an unclear message, we may be IMPLYING error IF that is not clarified (NOTE: A song leader CAN clarify meaning).



As we sing consider:

- Second, we need to realize that songs are a form of poetry and often use poetic devices - rhyme, for cadence and flow, etc. That is why word order may be changed, or more obscure or multi-defined words are used
- IF we consider this, then some songs might be acceptable if everyone understands the intended meaning.



As we sing consider:



Clarifying the meaning of words

- Remember, many of the songs we sing are decades or centuries old
 - usage and meaning of words has changed
- But, with clarification the intended message can be known
 - We are using Hymns for Worship (RJ Stevens Publishers), and we will notice these songs in book order



Clarifying meanings

- **Heaven's tableland** – found in the chorus
A “tableland” is a plateau – a broad, level place, usually in a mountainous or canyon region. Typically, it overlooks what is below.
- **Heaven's tableland** is a reference to our hope of heaven. Our desire to live anticipating what a beautiful and wonderful place it will be.
I think of **Deuteronomy 34:1ff** – where Moses was shown “the Promised Land”



#109 – Higher Ground

- **With the last advent we united**
 - found in vs. 3
 - A Lord's Supper song.
 - Advent** means the coming, arrival or appearance of something
 - This song reminds us of the time arriving for Jesus to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our redemption.
 - We remember that night “until He come”



#152 – By Christ Redeemed

- **In vain and high and holy lays**
Vs. 1 - **Lays** is an archaic word for a song.
This song is about singing praises to God as we consider how wonderful (full of wonder) the love of Jesus is



#155 – Wonderful Love of Jesus

- **Night with ebon pinion**

A Lord's Supper song that addresses His time in the Garden of Gethsemane and the sufferings He endured as He prepared for the cross

Vs. 1- **Ebon** – black, **pinion** – a bird's wing
This expression reminds us of the darkness of that occasion – betrayal, denial, anxiety, corruption, etc. as it leads to His crucifixion



#162 – Night with Ebon Pinion

- **Olive's brow**

Another Lord's Supper song about His time in the Garden of Gethsemane

Vs. 1 - **Olive's** – a reference to the Mount of Olives, where the garden was on its western slope (**Luke 22:39**)

brow – a ridge projecting out of a hill or mountain.

Poetic description of Jesus in that garden, designed to remind us that it was a real place and event



#183 – Tis Midnight,
and on Olive's Brow

- **Glad Hosannas to Christ the Lord and King**

Vs. 3 mentions **hosannas** – a Greek word that means, “help, I pray” or “Save, I pray”

Found in **Matthew 21:9**, as Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem. The people are rejoicing and ready to make Him king.

Having been forgiven, we ought to be singing “glad hosannas”



#218 – Just Over in the Glory-Land

- **Panoply of God**

A song that reminds us we are soldiers in the Lord's army, and ought to live as such (**cf. 2 Timothy 2:4**) Vs. 3 concludes, "Take to arm you for the fight, the **panoply** of God". The word is a transliteration of the Greek word translated, "whole armor" in **Ephesians 6:11, 13**

The prefix, *pan...*, mean all



#231 – Soldiers of Christ Arise

- **Sweetest note in Serpah song**
A song reminding us that Jesus is our spiritual physician (**cf. Matthew 9:12**)
The chorus mentions **seraph song** – a reference to a class of angels. With Seraph being the singular of seraphim
Mention in **Isaiah 6:2 & 6**, where he is called as a prophet



#338 – The Great Physician

- **Lean for succor on His breast**

A song that calls for us to be busy as long as we are on this earth

Vs. 3 describes us turning to Him for rest. **Succor** is a word that means assistance or relief in times of distress.

Consider **Matthew 11:28-30**

We will trust Him until He **conduct** (leads) us home



#396 – We'll Work Till Jesus
Comes

- **Eden's bowers bloom**

Vs. 2, **bowers** – an archaic word for a beautiful garden, or shady place of rest (an arbor).

Eden's bower would be reference to the Garden of Eden BEFORE the fall of man

Cf. **Genesis 3:24**

The song is saying, whether we are dealing with sorrows or joy, I will still trust in Him to lead me



#407 – He Leadeth Me

- **Here I raise my Ebenezer**

Vs. 2, **Ebenezer** – a word that means “a stone of help”

Found in **1 Samuel 7:12**, where Samuel is pleading for the people after being oppressed by the Philistines. They are delivered, and Samuel sets up a memorial stone between Mizpah and Shen and called it, Ebenezer.

This song says that we are reminding ourselves of the help He has provided us



#420 – O Thou Fount of Every
Blessing

- **Rose of Sharon**

Sharon – is a plain in Israel that is fertile along the Mediterranean coast.

Roses do grow there (there is a rose by that name)

Rose of Sharon and **Lily of the Valley**

(#594) are mentioned in **Song of Solomon 2:1**. A love poem about a Shunamite woman and her beloved.

This song is reminding us of how pleasant Jesus is and that thoughts of Him ought to “bloom within my heart”



#445 – Jesus, Rose of Sharon

- **Gilding Jordan's wave**

Vs. 4 concludes with this phrase.

Gilding is the process of applying a thin layer of gold on an object to enhance it's appearance.

Jordan is a river of significance. Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land.

Often in songs, Jordan is symbolic of crossing into eternity in heaven after we conclude our life here.

The point of the expression is a request that we make our desire to go to heaven as appealing as possible




#500 – Give Me the Bible

- We could address other songs and phrases, but time is up for today. Understand that songs in our books are not inspired, and thus subject to man's frailties – that is why we must examine songs before we sing them.



Concluding thoughts:



Are we striving to sing
“with the spirit and with
the understanding?”

The background features a repeating pattern of faint, light-colored musical notes (quarter notes) on a light blue and white gradient. The notes are arranged in a grid-like fashion, creating a subtle, textured effect. The overall color palette is cool and serene, with the text standing out in a dark, bold font.

Let us pray!