HYMNS: AN ENDURING JOURNEY OF PRAYER

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth. (Psalm 96:1)

Hymns come soaked in a rich history that reminds us of what our brothers and sisters in Christ have experienced. They are an often-overlooked form of prayer.

HYMNS:

- are rooted in Scripture.
- comfort and encourage us.
- remind us we are not alone in our struggles.
- give us the courage to face challenging situations.
- connect us to God.
- remind us of God's grace and promises.
- build unity and community among believers.
- express deep and meaningful theology.
- mark spiritual occasions.

WRITE A HYMN OF PRAYER TO THE LORD

Some of the best-loved hymns were written in very simple poetry. Hymn writer Fanny Crosby said, "It may seem a little old-fashioned, always to begin one's work with prayer; but I never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be my inspiration."

Modern hymn writer June Edwards writes, "I begin to write usually when something is bothering me, or I have strong feelings. Often it is something that is troubling me enough that I'm praying about it ... and the resulting hymn is the answer to my praying."

TIPS TO BEGIN:

- What are you struggling with today?
- Have you taken it to God in prayer?
- What Scripture verses come to mind?
- Compose a poem about your experience - weigh and contemplate the words before gently placing them into your hymn.
- If there is music from an established hymn or song you especially enjoy use that to compose your lyrical prayer.

PRAYING THROUGH GREAT HYMNS

Sometimes we come to prayer empty, sometimes with no words. Hymns can help us express the deepest and greatest longings of our hearts in ways we might never have experienced. Use these lines to step into a refreshing new journey of prayer.

- O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be.
  (*O Love That Will Not Let Me Go* by George Matheson, 1882)
- ...discord filled my heart with pain, Jesus swept across the broken strings, stirred the slumbering chords again.
  (*He Keeps Me Singing* by Luther B. Bridgers, 1910)
- O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free, rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me. (*O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus* by S. Trevor Francis)
- Lord, how your wonders are displayed, where'er we turn our eyes, if we survey the ground we tread or gaze upon the skies.
  (*I Sing the Almighty Power of God* by Isaac Watts)
- Come, thou Fount of every blessing; tune my heart to sing thy grace; streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. (*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* by Robert Robinson, 1758)
- Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning, new mercies I see; all I have needed Thy hand hath provided: great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!
  (*Great Is Thy Faithfulness* by Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923)
- When life's dark maze I tread and griefs around me spread, be Thou my Guide; bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tears away, nor let me ever stray from Thee aside.
  (*My Faith Looks Up to Thee* by Ray Palmer, 1830)
- When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul." (*When Peace, Like a River* by Horatio Gates Spafford,1873)
- Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side; bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. (*Be Still, My Soul* by Kathrina von Schlegel, 1752)
- Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love the way you love, and do what you would do.
  (*Breathe on Me, Breath of God* by Edwin Hatch, 1878)
- Come, ye weary, heavy laden, lost and ruined by the fall; if you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all.
  (*Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy* by J. Hart, 1759)