
Worshiping God Through Song

- Values That Guide Our Corporate Singing -

Kennewick Baptist Church



What We Aim For In Our Singing

**Much of this content has been adapted from Matt Merker, Pastoral Assistant at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington D.C.: "Worshiping God Through Song"*

We have an amazing privilege to praise God together in song each Sunday. Music is a beautiful part of life and a gift from God that has a powerful effect on our hearts. Music gives us a unique way that we can glorify God and encourage one another in Christ. You may wonder why we do music the way we do here at KBC. Our desire is to approach our singing with deliberate thought and care.

Our main purpose in corporate gatherings is to enjoy and display the worth of Christ in God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led, Bible-saturated worship. We want to hear from God and respond to him. We know the Lord through his Word, and we come together corporately to pursue him through reading, preaching, singing, praying, and seeing the truth in Scripture. We also see the gracious work of God displayed visibly through the celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Following are six ways we want to keep these values central in our singing.

1. We want to exalt biblical truth in music that leads to an appropriate emotional response.

God created music as a medium that stirs great emotion in the human heart. Therefore we want to use music responsibly in order to highlight and celebrate biblical truth. We recognize that music can make people feel certain emotions regardless of the lyrics' message, so we're careful to pick songs that have sound biblical content and to avoid over-emotionalizing our music. The emotion in worship should be a response to the truth of who God is and what he has done.

2. We want to cultivate rich congregational singing.

When John views God's throne room in Revelation 5-7, the whole gathered congregation joins their voices together to praise the Lamb. Our goal is for everyone to participate and not simply observe. Paul tells the Ephesians, "*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*" (Eph. 5:19), which reminds us that although our worship through song is primarily God-oriented, it also has a secondary purpose of encouraging one another.



We put the words of every song on the front screen to make it easy for you to follow. We try to keep the volume at an appropriate level that is easy to follow, yet allows us to hear one another as we sing. We try to be skilled in our musicianship, but never in a way that seeks to impress or distract our attention from what we are singing about. We also seek to avoid performances and “special music” in our services unless it specifically helps us to see an important truth about God in a unique way.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

Colossians 3:16

3. We want to use a simple musical style that promotes unity.

Our hope is that KBC would be a community of faith that includes people from all backgrounds and cultures, united in our trust in Jesus Christ. When it comes to worshiping God, the style of music we use is extremely unimportant in a theological sense. We don’t want to be so musically diverse that it becomes stylistically confusing or disjointed. On the other hand, we want to express praise in ways that fit the cultures of our own people at this church. Our hope is that a diverse group of people with varying musical tastes would be able to sing together and enjoy unity around the rich biblical content of the songs.

Our musical style won’t be everyone’s favorite, but that means singing together gives us an opportunity to sacrifice our personal preferences for the sake of the whole congregation, and in so doing we are obeying God’s command to “*encourage one another and build one another up*” (1 Thess. 5:11).

4. We want to appreciate God-honoring music from all eras.

In our services, our aim is not to incorporate the “best of the ‘80s, ‘90s, and today,” but the best from all of the periods of Christian history from which we have music—including today. Singing edifying hymns from long ago is one way that we appreciate the witness of our brothers and sisters from past centuries, and even learn from their example.



“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...”

Ephesians 5:19

5. We want to reflect the full spectrum of Christian experience in our music.

Our goal is to sing music that captures the whole array of the Christian life – from the sorrow we have over our sin to the joy of our redemption in Christ, and from the pain of trials and persecution to the happy expectancy of finally seeing Jesus face to face.

We see this variety of expression conveyed wonderfully throughout the Psalms and other Scriptures. Some of the slower songs we sing at KBC may be new to you, but we pray that these songs would become helpful companions to you during times of suffering, as they have for so many of us.

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice,

'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

Revelation 7:9-10

6. We want to retell the gospel in every service.

One of the ways we continually preach the gospel to ourselves at this church is by singing the gospel. We do this by singing songs that are explicitly about the gospel, but we also intentionally plan each service so that the order of our songs reflects the gospel. How does this work?

We begin with a song or two of **adoration** for God's greatness, holiness, and glory. In light of God's glory our response (*Isaiah 6:1-8*) ought to be an acknowledgement that we have fallen short of His glory and continue to struggle with sin leading us to **confession**. As we confess we remember that God is merciful toward us when we repent and offers forgiveness in Christ leading us to **thanksgiving**. After the sermon we sing a song of **response** to the truth we have heard in God's Word.



Our Values in Corporate Worship Gatherings

In addition to all that has been said, we have identified the following values that we desire to shape our gatherings each Sunday:

God-Centered – We pursue joy in God and honor him as our greatest treasure.

Gospel-Saturated – We savor the truth and sweetness of the gospel. We want to convey the full breadth of the gospel including the character of God, our sinfulness, the sacrifice of Christ required for our forgiveness, the wonder of being redeemed, the privilege of serving God, and our eternal hope.

Bible-Saturated – The content of our singing, praying, and preaching should always conform to the truth of Scripture.

Expecting God's Presence – We draw near to God in confidence that He will draw near to us.

Head and Heart – The elements of our worship gatherings should stir deep and real emotions toward God, but always rooted in clear thinking about Biblical truth.

Earnestness and Intensity – We will try to avoid being superficial, and instead will aim to set an example of reverence, passion, wonder, and broken-hearted joy.

Authenticity – We do not pursue an atmosphere of artistic performance or showmanship, but one of a personal encounter with God.

Preferring One Another – We strive to love and serve one another by holding musical preferences loosely and singing joyfully alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Un-distracting Excellence – We want to lead in such a way that people's attention will not be diverted from the glory of God.

Appreciative of Christian Worship Past and Present – We glean from songs that have benefited the church historically as well as in our own day.

Participation – We want to be a singing people, encouraging corporate participation.

Warmth – We welcome one another graciously as God has welcomed us.

Prayer – We pray earnestly and regularly for the glory of God, the good of his people, and the salvation of unbelievers.

Generosity – We give joyfully of our time, talents, and treasures because God has given his Son for us.



Worship Resources We Draw From at KBC

While there are a plethora of songs written for the church, we want to choose songs wisely as we think about our own liturgy (a *fancy word for a church's order of worship*). Generally speaking we seek to choose songs that are biblically rich, sound in theology, and clear about the gospel. We also want to choose from a variety of sources while considering that we have a variety of people in our church. While every church is going to have a "music culture," we don't want to be overly attached to one particular style. At the same time we don't want to have so much variety that we become stylistically confusing.

Our main purpose in corporate gatherings is to enjoy and display the worth of Christ in God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led, Bible-saturated worship. We want to hear from God and respond to him. We know the Lord through his Word, and we come together corporately to pursue him through reading, preaching, singing, praying, and seeing the truth in Scripture. Our songs should clearly and consistently point us to the glory of the cross, the faithfulness of our God, and our hope in Him both now and forever.

Worship Resources We Have Drawn From:

- ❖ The Best of Hymns
- ❖ Sovereign Grace
- ❖ Matt Boswell
- ❖ Keith & Kristyn Getty
- ❖ Stuart Townend
- ❖ Matt Redman
- ❖ Chris Tomlin
- ❖ Austin Stone
- ❖ Vertical Worship
- ❖ Dustin Kensrue
- ❖ I Am They
- ❖ Matt Merker
- ❖ David Ward

Further resources we have not used, but are excellent:

- ❖ Emu Music
- ❖ Indelible Grace
- ❖ Red Mountain Music
- ❖ Sojourn Music
- ❖ Aaron Keyes

Choosing Songs

Did you know that Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) has 300,000 songs available for churches to use? An average hymnal has about 700 songs, and you thought *that* was a lot! With so many songs at our disposal, how does a church choose what songs to sing? Do we just grab the latest and greatest songs we hear on the radio? Do we stick with old songs that have proven the test of time? How do we narrow down a list of 300,000 songs? Following are some of the parameters we use to narrow our song choices at KBC:

Is it biblical and theologically sound? We are told in Colossians 3:16 to “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*” Songs teach and people remember them. Therefore we want our songs to be in accord with what is true.

Is it clear? Poetry is a beautiful gift and often helps express the depth of human emotion or display a truth in a unique way. At the same time poetry can be written in vague or confusing ways. As much as possible we want our songs to convey the truth in ways that are understandable. At times this may be difficult with older hymns that use language that is no longer common. With such songs it is beneficial to teach what they mean from time to time.

Is it God-centered? We’re not asking whether or not God is mentioned in a song, but whether or not the song is focused on God and not ourselves. It isn’t wrong to sing from our own perspective, but we want to avoid singing in ways that make everything about us. The answer to our deepest longings and hopes is God Himself and we want to consistently look to Him for our joy and for His glory.

Is it singable? Some songs are written in ranges that are so wide that only professionally trained singers could sing them. Others contain melodies that are so nuanced that it would take months of singing the song every Sunday just to learn them. We believe it is important that we sing songs that are singable as well as delightful to sing (Psalm 147:1). Practically this means we try to keep songs between a low A and a high D, and we try to choose songs with melodies that we are able to learn with relative ease.

Do the words and music wed together well? If songs are meant to address both the head and the heart then it makes sense that *what* we are singing should match well with *how* we are singing. A song that is exclusively about the joy of our salvation and the promises of God makes most sense wedded to a jubilant melody. A song of lament makes most sense wedded to a slower, more contemplative song.

Does it fit the culture of our church? We want to be mindful of the culture of people God brings to us at KBC, and our music should reflect this culture as is appropriate.



Can we play it instrumentally? We also want to be mindful of our music team and their capabilities. This may limit or expand our choices depending on who the Lord brings to our team.

Will this song stand the test of time? Some songs will come and go rapidly, especially if they are frequently on the radio. There's nothing wrong with this. In fact it may even help us to obey Scripture (Psalm 33:3, 96:1, 149:1). But we also want to sing songs that will stay with us for a while through seasons of blessing and seasons of grief. We need songs that will come to mind when we lose a job, receive bad news, or suffer persecution. The church needs songs that will become anthems in our lives that help us to trust in the Lord.



Resources on how to choose songs:

- ❖ Bob Kauflin on choosing songs:
 - <https://worshipmatters.com/2014/01/07/what-kind-of-songs-should-you-lead-in-2014/>
- ❖ Kevin DeYoung on choosing songs:
 - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/ten-principles-for-church-song-part-1/>
 - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/ten-principles-for-church-singing-part-2/>

“The heart of Biblical worship is the exaltation of Jesus Christ and his work on the cross.”

Bob Kauflin

Our Weekly Liturgy

Our regular weekly services include 10 aspects:

“Revelation” is where we focus on who God is & why He's so great.

“Adoration” is our response to the greatness of God.

“Confession” is our admission of sin and guilt and a desire to grow in faith & repentance.

“Assurance” is remembering our blood-bought forgiveness in Christ.

“Thanksgiving” is celebrating God's steadfast love & faithfulness.

In **“Supplication”** we are led in a pastoral prayer for ourselves, our neighbors, & our world.

“Proclamation” is the preaching of God's Word.

“Dedication” is our response to God's Word & committing of ourselves to believe & obey Him.

“Commemoration” is how we remember that Jesus died for us, taking on the wrath of God for our sin, & gaining victory over sin & death for us through His resurrection. We do this through the Lord's Supper once a month (*usually the first Sunday of each month*).

“Commission” is sending out the church into the world to delight in God & proclaim the gospel.

Why do we do it this way?

If you've been around our church for a while, you might have noticed that we have a consistent structure to our services. This structure is referred to as a “liturgy.” Every church uses a liturgy in their corporate gatherings because every church makes plans about how they will go about things. So, how do we create a liturgy? Some options might be a theme each week, everyone's favorite songs & prayers, or randomly. But is there a better way?

We believe we should organize our meetings around the central message of the bible: **the gospel**. True worship is rightly responding to who God has revealed Himself to be and God has revealed himself as one who is worthy of all glory, redeems sinners who have fallen away from him, and restores us to himself by granting us repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ.

Our liturgy is a way for us to recite the gospel to one another each week. Church history is rich with liturgies that retell the gospel each Sunday and they keep us from drifting away from the Bible's central message, that God has given His Son for us.

Our main purpose in corporate gatherings is to enjoy and display the worth of Christ in God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led, Bible-saturated worship. We want to hear from God and respond to him. We know the Lord through his Word, and we come together corporately to pursue him through reading, preaching, singing, praying, and seeing the truth in Scripture... and especially by remembering the gospel together.

