



As I am sure you are all well aware of the fact that I love to worship. I love the old hymns, the pieces that our choir sing and the contemporary songs from W@9 really touch my heart. That has always been the case for me. From being a choir boy in St. Marks Church Portadown, to playing in Christians bands and to lead worship now, brings me so much joy. However, I feel that we have forgotten the importance of singing in our churches. It really doesn't matter to God if you can hold a tune, He just loves you singing praises to Him. I hear so many people tell me that they can't sing unless they are in the shower because no one else would want to hear them sing. Well, God wants to hear you! Worship is personal but it isn't private. Now of course there is the personal side to Christianity: personal conversion, personal decisions, personal quiet times and these are so important, but the New Testament provides us with a different side to being a Christian. Jesus and the biblical writers tell us more than 50 times to do something in the context of "one another." You can't "encourage one another" 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "bear one another's burdens" Galatians 6:2 or "love one another" Romans 12:10, on your own. Jesus requires us to be in community. That is why coming to a worship is so important because

the Bible expects us to sing together. The New Testament doesn't describe many details for Christian worship services, but it does tell us how to sing when we gather. In one passage, Paul tells the Ephesian church to be filled with the Spirit, not wine. The Spirit-filled life, according to Paul, is a singing life and the songs that flow from the Spirit's filling go in two directions. On one hand, we sing to the Lord, "Making melody to the Lord with your heart." On the other hand, Paul says, we sing to "One another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." Worship, then, isn't only about you and Jesus. We sing to one another, for one another and with one another and this is why our worship experience is such a blessing.

There is nothing more powerful and moving than God's people singing from their heart. I have never forgot being told that our worship songs or hymns bring us into the presence of God and make us ready to hear from God. When Christians sing together, the ancient cords that bind us to Christ and to one another grow stronger. Singing together also strengthens our faith. When we sing great truths of the faith together, we remind one another of what we believe, we remind one another that we're not in this alone and we remind one another just how much we've got to sing about.

But for me and I hope for you, it's the fact that our singing transforms our lives and the lives of others that's important. When we get this right, we say something to the world around us. Singing with other people is strange, and our strangeness offers something genuinely different to the world. But have you ever thought that singing together makes us more Christlike. When we remember that worship isn't just about us, we'll be more prone to consider the interests of others, and we won't fight for our way over things like song choice and musical style. The Christian life isn't a solo. Hebrews 12:1 tells us that we have a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and we will one day join them in singing a new song before the throne. Until then, don't miss out or rob yourself of the joy that comes from singing with other believers. Make worship your priority and you will experience the blessings that come from being in the presence of our God.

