

As I begin this week's *Laptop*, the first thing on most of our minds is yesterday's terrorist attack on the Boston Marathon. Let us continue to give thanks for the first responders, medical personnel, and citizen heroes who rendered aid in the midst of the storm, running toward the explosions even as most were running away from them.

And let us renew our commitment to doing all we can to advance the Kingdom of God in our time, changing hearts through God's Holy Spirit, which is the only real way such carnage is prevented. Let us, by God's grace, push back the Darkness, one heart, one life at a time!



On another subject, I got several texts and emails from our son, Nathan, this afternoon. His family is in Phoenix, Arizona, where Lisel is attending a conference, and he was reminding me that he and I climbed some of the striking hills in the Phoenix basin when we were there attending a Promise Keepers event a decade ago.

I probably attended my first Promise Keepers event about fifteen years ago. I went out of curiosity and out of a sense of responsibility to know more about what the men of our church were finding so powerful about PK weekends. When a PK event came to Louisville, where we lived at the time, I had no reasonable excuse not to go, so I went.

What I found was Louisville's Freedom Hall filled with 20,000 men of all ages who were worshiping God using the contemporary means of a praise band, praise songs, and lyrics projected on huge Jumbotron screens. Many of the men lifted their hands to God as they sang. I was uncomfortable.

That first evening, I saw literally hundreds of men making professions of faith in Jesus, and hundreds—maybe thousands more—recommitting their lives to him. As a pastor, I was able to pray with some of these men. I saw burly men crying as they literally nailed their sins to a fifteen-foot wooden cross.

The next morning, I and the very proper attorney friend with whom I had come decided to risk a little more in our worship. There was no one nearby whom we knew, so we decided to see what it's like to lift one's hands in worship. I was both surprised and overwhelmed by what happened.

As I lifted my hands to sing "Take this life as I live, and all I have to give. Take this life as a worship offering," I began to cry. I couldn't stop crying. I cried all afternoon as we sang such things as "Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see. Beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of a life spent with you. So here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God. You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me." I had never heard this song before, but I've sung it often since.

I was surprised to discover at that first PK experience that lifting my hands to God was a powerful means of praise, connecting me emotionally to worship in ways that I had seldom experienced before, and doing it consistently. Later, I was interested to see that Psalm 134:2 tells us to “*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord.*” In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul wrote that “*wherever you assemble, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God.*” This was apparently not to be something unusual, but the normal way of doing things.



Elsewhere, Paul also wrote these words about worship: “*Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts*” (Colossians 3:16).

Paul wasn’t talking about skillful singing nearly so much as he was referring to the natural overflow of a joyful heart. Such musical overflow takes many different shapes. Whether it be hymns growing out of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries or the spiritual songs that are popular today, both can be equally “scriptural,” and both have their place in Christian worship.

“Traditional” and “Modern” worship music functions differently in helping us to worship God. Traditional hymns tend to be “linear,” with a story-line that continues through each verse toward its resolution. Such linear hymns are very effective in telling stories and in communicating left-brained, doctrinal content—they are very effective means of teaching the fundamentals of our faith.

“Praise & Worship” music, on the other hand, tends to be not linear but “circular,” repeating one or two verses a number of times before resolution comes. Such circular songs are very effective in creating right-brained moods of intimacy, vulnerability, and openness to God. I’m grateful that our worship regularly offers opportunity for both. I know that I need both myself in order to maintain spiritual balance in my life, nurturing both left-brained and right-brained worship of our Lord.

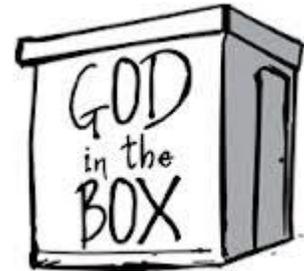
Robert Schnase has observed that “It is a mystery how music shapes the human spirit, but it does. Music makes us happy—to sing it, hear it, and share it. And music moves us to profound contemplation, reaching depths that are otherwise inaccessible by mere words or intentional reflection. Music helps us say things we have trouble speaking in words. It offers a means to proclaim our love for God that comes not only from the conventional thoughts of our minds, but from the more emotive, heartfelt, spontaneous parts in our souls. With music, we discover accents of wonder and dimensions of awe that are otherwise inexpressible.”

Even better, perhaps, music remains with us, embedding rhythms, tunes, and words within us without our even knowing it. Music releases our spirits and writes spiritual Truth on our hearts in such a way that we carry it with us wherever we go. So whether you have a trained voice or not, I encourage you—indeed, I urge you!—to be a full participant in our shared worship of music on Sunday mornings, on Wednesday evenings, and whenever else your heart simply overflows with gratitude and praise!

Dave



- Please remember that we have a **Prayer Triplet Reporting Session** in the Chapel *this Saturday* at 9:30 a.m. Please do your best to have at least one member of your Triplet present for that experience.
- Please note the attachment about the **Alleluias** concert at OMI *this Sunday* afternoon.
- Please note the huge black box in the foyer and consider experiencing it yourself (instructions are attached to the box). Then come to see the documentary film, **God in the Box**, *this Sunday* evening at 7 p.m.
- Please remember that the first iteration of **CLASS 101** will be this Monday evening at 7 p.m. in the Chapel.
- Please note the attachment about the workshops coming up on “**Sacred Space.**” Your RSVP is requested so that adequate preparation can be made.



Give yourself a Great Gift
this spring . . . join CBF!!!

May 19th is Your Day.